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How To Use The Independent Chip Model (ICM).

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

Try out my free [ICM calculator "CHIMP" \(../tools/pokerbank/chimp/\)](#) to work out ICM in SNGs. It's a really handy ICM program.

[What is ICM? \(../what/\)](#) > **How to use ICM**

In my previous article that answered the question "[what is ICM in Poker? \(../what/\)](#)" we found out that different chip stack sizes had varying amounts of equity in the overall tournament prize pool. To echo the last article's chip stacks example:

- **Player A** - 5,000 chips.
- **Player B** - 2,500 chips.
- **Player C** - 2,500 chips.

Each player had the following amount of \$ equity in the \$100 prize pool that paid \$50 for 1st, \$30 for 2nd, and \$20 for 3rd.

- **Player A:** (5,000 chips) = **\$38.33** equity.
- **Player B:** (2,500 chips) = **\$30.83** equity.
- **Player C:** (2,500 chips) = **\$30.83** equity.

In this article I will show you **how you can use these ICM equity numbers** to work out whether or not to call all-ins from other players as we approach the money positions in [Texas Holdem Sit and Go's \(/rooms/games/sng/\)](#).



cEV and \$EV.

First things first, we need to understand the difference between **cEV** (chip EV) and **\$EV** (money EV) in Sit and Go tournaments. As you should (hopefully) already know, EV stands for "Expected Value (../../mathematics/expected-value/)".

- **cEV** is the amount of tournament *chips* we expect to gain/lose from a play.
- **\$EV** is the amount of tournament *equity* or money we expect to gain/lose from a play.

cEV.

Chip EV is like standard EV in cash games ([/rooms/games/cash/](http://rooms/games/cash/)). For example, if your opponent pushes all in for 1,000 chips with AQ and you call with AK, you expect on average to make 480 chips every time you call this all in (I worked this out with some basic EV calculations).

Chip EV is just as you would expect - it's simply how many tournament chips you expect to gain on average from each play you make.

\$EV

\$EV is like a slightly advanced version of cEV, as \$EV indicates **how much extra money you expect to gain in prize pool equity** from the tournament from each play you make.

For example, if you call an all-in with AK against AQ like in the cEV example you may earn +480 chips, but now that you've added those extra 480 chips to your stack how much more equity do you have in the overall prize pool? To put it another way, how much more likely are you to win money from the tournament with those extra 480 chips?

This is the difference between cEV and \$EV, where \$EV is going to be a far more profitable way to look at expected value in tournaments. \$EV is pretty much the whole basis of the article, so do not worry if you do not understand what I mean by this term just yet. It will become clearer as we go along.

Using ICM when faced with tough decisions.

When faced with a tough decision, we want to work out whether calling increases our overall prize pool equity.

For example, if we have ATo in the BB and the SB pushes all in with any random hand, we don't care about how many tournament chips we expect to win on average by calling, **we just want to know whether calling increases our prize pool equity.**

After all, we're not going to want to risk our chances of finishing in the money by placing ourselves in a situation that's only slightly better than a coin flip. So this is where we use ICM to work out whether making a big call near or on the bubble is profitable over the long run.

Using ICM example.

Lets say we are playing in a standard 10 player, \$10+\$1 tournament at PokerStars with a \$100 prize pool that pays; \$50 for 1st, \$30 for 2nd, and \$20 for 3rd. Following on from the previous example, there are 4 players left at the table and we are in the BB holding ATo.

The blinds are 100 / 200 and the stack sizes are as follows:

- (HERO BB) Player A - 2,000
- (SB) Player B - 2,000
- (BTN) Player C - 2,500
- (CO) Player D - 3,500

Everyone folds to the SB who pushes all in for 2,000 chips. We know for a fact that this guy is stupidly aggressive and could well be pushing all-in with any two cards. So should we call or should we fold? Well, we need to do 3 things:

1. Work out our equity against our opponent's range.
2. Work out the changes in prize pool equity for the different outcomes (of calling and winning/losing or folding).
3. Work out if we increase our prize pool equity by calling.

1) *Work out our equity.*

Let's start with the basics and work out the % chance of winning our ATo hand has against our opponent's any 2 cards. If we input this in to [PokerStove \(../.../tools/software/pokerstove/\)](https://pokerstove.com/), we find that our hand has **62.7% equity against their range.**

See the articles on [range \(../.../concepts/rem/range/\)](https://pokerstove.com/concepts/rem/range/) and [range equity \(../.../concepts/rem/equity/\)](https://pokerstove.com/concepts/rem/equity/) for more information on this particular topic.

Hand Distribution			Equity
Player 1	$\frac{R}{D}$	ATo	62.722%
Player 2	$\frac{R}{D}$	random	37.278%

Therefore, we can say that:

- There is a 62.7% chance that we will increase our stack to 4,000 chips.
- There is a 37.3% chance that we will lose all of our chips and leave the tournament with nothing.

Calling seems a little bit risky already, but let's move on to the next step to see whether or not it's actually going to be profitable to make this call over the long run.

2) *Work out the different changes in prize pool equity.*

To work this out we are going to require the use of our trusty [ICM calculator](http://pokerbank.com/chimp/) (<http://pokerbank.com/chimp/>). To work out the change in our prize pool equity and which action is most profitable, we will need to work out 3 things:

1. Our equity if we call and win.
2. Our equity if we call and lose.
3. Our equity if we fold to the all-in.

In the following quick examples I'm going to omit the blinds. I could include them, but it just makes following the example a lot easier for you if I leave them out for now.

Our equity if we call and win.

If we call and win, our chip stack increases to 4,000 and Player B gets knocked out. Using the ICM calculator the new prize pool equity between the 3 players would be:

-
- **Player A:** (4,000 chips) = **\$35.49** equity. <- Our prize pool equity if we call and win.
 - **Player B:** (0 chips) = **\$0** equity.
 - **Player C:** (2,500 chips) = **\$30.51** equity.
 - **Player D:** (3,500 chips) = **\$34** equity.
-

Our equity if we call and lose.

If we lose we are out of the tournament, so as you can guess our prize pool equity will be \$0. I'll post the equity results anyway just to keep things consistent.

-
- **Player A:** (0 chips) = **\$0** equity. <- Our prize pool equity if we call and lose.
 - **Player B:** (4,000 chips) = **\$35.49** equity.
 - **Player C:** (2,500 chips) = **\$30.51** equity.
 - **Player D:** (3,500 chips) = **\$34** equity.
-

Our equity if we fold.

If we fold, our equity decreases a little because of the 200 chips we had to put in for the big blind.

-
- **Player A:** (1,800 chips) = **\$20.29** equity. <- Our prize pool equity if we fold to the all-in.
 - **Player B:** (2,200 chips) = **\$23.48** equity.
 - **Player C:** (2,500 chips) = **\$25.50** equity.
 - **Player D:** (3,500 chips) = **\$30.73** equity.
-

3) Work out if we increase our prize pool equity by calling.

So then, which action is more profitable? Calling or folding?

If we fold, our equity drops to **\$20.29**.

If we call, 63% of the time we are going to move our equity up to \$35.49 and 37% of the time our equity will drop to \$0. So if we calculate our average total prize pool equity from calling we get:

Total prize pool equity = $(0.63 * 35.49) + (0.37 * 0) = \mathbf{\$22.36}$.

So, comparing the two:

- Folding = **\$20.29**.
- Calling = **\$22.36**.

As you can see, our overall prize pool equity **increases** by calling this all-in bet. Therefore, it is more profitable to call with ATo over the long run against any random hand than it is to fold and save our chips. Even though on average every time we call we are only earning an extra \$2.07, calling remains as the optimum play in this particular situation.

| If your total prize pool equity decreases by calling, you should fold.

| If your total prize pool equity increases by calling, you should call.

Evaluation of using ICM in Sit and Go tournaments.

Now I know what you're all thinking... how the hell am I supposed to work all of this out in the middle of a tournament? Well, in all honesty you can't, but this doesn't mean that learning about ICM has no value.

Making decisions using the independent chip model and prize pool equity is useful for post-game analysis and helping you to gauge risk vs. reward situations near the bubble. ICM is basically the theory behind the common concern of "is it worth risking all my chips in this spot?". The more you familiarize yourself with this concept, the more adept you will be at making the correct play in tricky situations.

I know that this has been a pretty long article, but trust me, if I could have made it any shorter I would have done! All ICM decisions boil down to at the end of the day are the 2 simple steps of working out your equity against your opponent's hand range, then working out whether your prize pool equity increases or decreases by calling.

To reiterate the two important concluding points of using ICM:

| If your total prize pool equity decreases by calling, you should fold.

| If your total prize pool equity increases by calling, you should call.

Easy, right?

Further reading on the independent chip model (ICM).

- ICM by HoldemReview.com (<https://www.holdemreview.com/using-icm-in-sit-and-gos/>).
- Introduction to ICM by SitandGoPlanet.com
(https://www.sitandgoplanet.com/sitandgo/sng_bubble/Introduction_to%20ICM.html).

This article is long enough, but if I didn't cover everything or explain a few points too well, you may benefit reading up on the same topic from other talented writers. You might find that you respond better to other writers' teaching methods, or that reading the same idea from a different perspective helps to reinforce a few key points.

Either way, I have found the 3 articles above to be the most useful for learning about ICM.

Go back to the awesome Texas Hold'em Strategy (</strategy/>).

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? **Anonymous**
0 points · 11 years ago

if your opponent pushes all in for 1,000 chips with AQ and you call with AK, you expect on average to make 480 chips every time you call this all in. Please explain?

C **Chris**
0 points · 8 years ago

Chip EV. AKo has equity of 74.02% against AQo, which has equity 25.98%. Payoff is 1000 chips if you win, and -1000 chips if you lose.

Therefore $EV = (0.7402 \cdot 1000) + (0.2598 \cdot -1000) = 480.4$. Which rounds to 480.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 10 years ago

I'm pretty sure it is closer to \$751.70 because it should be about 71.72% to win, 4.59% to tie and 23.69% to lose. So $(71.72/95.41) \cdot 1000 \sim 751.70$. That being said, the rest of this article looked excellent.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 10 years ago

The losses need to be subtracted from the wins. That brings the ev to ~ 480.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 10 years ago

which can be done very easily in the head :

win ~ 72%. loose ~ 23% so $72 - 23 = 49$ ish

so u win +49% of what u push all in with. if its 100 stacks u have, u average on a 149.

another example: AA vs KK

AA wins 80% loses 20%. $80 - 20 = 60$

so if u go all in with 100, u can expect to average 160. less than u'd think, right ?

?

Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

Great article. But why you don't loose your big blind when you fold it?

G

Greg

0 points · 13 years ago

Good catch xander. I totally forgot about the fact that we will have t200 less thanks to the big blind. I've updated the article with the correct stack sizes and prize pool equities when we fold.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

let me rephrase the previous question since theres no response. How would I go about using the ICM calculator when playing 180 man sit n go? when and where in the tourney is this appropriate.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

Thanks, cleared up everything I needed to know. There's also an app (cell, tablet) to help you compute all this cra... stuff on the fly in the real world. Eventually, as with computing it practicing anything, it becomes second nature, and yup can lose the training wheels...in a

?

Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

* Player A: (1,800 chips) = \$20.11 equity. <- Our prize pool equity if we fold to th
* Player B: (2,300 chips) = \$24.01 equity.
* Player C: (2,500 chips) = \$25.32 equity.
* Player D: (3,500 chips) = \$30.56 equity.

If the blind is 100/200 and player B shoves and player A folds, that would give player B = 2200 chips instead of 2300, otherwise there would suddenly be 10100 chips in play :) ?

Isn't that correct?

G

Greg

0 points · 13 years ago

You're right. Thanks TDK!

?

Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

How do we use the ICM calculator when playing 180 player sit n go with 18 places? Lets say there are only 18 players left, there is only 10 spaces for both the prize% and player slots, and do we use the Initial chips or the Total chips and how do we get the total chips for this tourney? By the way I'm using C.H.I.M.P. Thx and look forward to your reply.

R

Rob

0 points · 7 years ago

In the above example, say player C is guaranteed to shove on the button with ATC and we are the hero in the CO trying to work the ICM situation with our ATo - what is the correct EV calculation? Working out the ICM position of each scenario is straight forward with CHIMP.

Starting situation: Chips \$equity

(BB) Player A - 2,000 \$21.92

(SB) Player B - 2,000 \$21.92

(BTN) Player C - 2,500 \$25.46

(CO Hero) Player D - 3,500 \$30.71

If blinds fold and D wins:

(BB) Player A - 1,800 \$28.89

(SB) Player B - 1,900 \$29.35

(BTN) Player C - 0

(CO Hero) Player D - 6,300 \$41.76

If blinds fold and D loses:

(BB) Player A - 1,800 \$23.21

(SB) Player B - 1,900 \$23.98

(BTN) Player C - 5,300 \$38.18

(CO Hero) Player D - 1,000 \$14.63

If blinds fold and D folds:

(BB) Player A - 1,800 \$20.46

(SB) Player B - 1,900 \$21.31

(BTN) Player C - 2,800 \$27.40
(CO Hero) Player D - 3,500 \$30.83

Hopefully the formatting remains after submitting, but anyway, the long and short of those tables is that the ICM equity calc gives the hero's equity as \$30.83 if he folds, \$14.63 if he loses (0.37 chance of that) and \$41.76 if he wins (0.63 chance of that).

Is the correct EV calculation $(0.63 * \$41.76) + (0.37 * \$14.63) = \$31.72$?? It seems odd to add both terms together because if you have any chips left after losing (which means you have some equity in the prize pool), a proportion of your loss equity is always ADDED to your win equity making a bet or call more likely to be more EV than a fold. ?? Isn't that biasing you towards a bet/call? Appreciate some thoughts!

Interesting to note that folding is +EV for the big stack.

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What Is The Independent Chip Model (ICM)?

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

What is ICM? > [How to use ICM \(../how/\)](#).

Easy-to-understand guides for the **independent chip model** (ICM) in poker are few and far between, so I'm going to try hard to keep this article as concise and relevant to improving your Sit and Go tournament game as possible.

In this article I aim to answer the question "what is the independent chip model?" and also highlight how you can go about working it out.

In the next article, I will explain [how ICM can be used in tournament poker \(../how/\)](#) to help you make profitable decisions near the bubble. Let's get started...



What is the independent chip model?

The independent chip model assigns \$ value to your chip stack in a tournament.

How much are 100 chips worth in a tournament? How about 10,000 chips? Well that all depends on a few things:

- The amount of chips in play.
- The prize pool distribution.

The amount of chips in play.

If there are only 1,000 chips in play, then those 100 chips are quite valuable. However, if there are 100,000 chips in play, then 100 chips isn't really going to be worth all that much at all.

The prize structure.

Lets say you have 100 chips (out of 1,000 left at the table), there are 5 players left and **only 1st place pays**. The \$ value of those 100 chips is not really a lot, as your chances of walking away from the tournament with some money in your pocket is quite slim.

However, if there are 5 players left and there is an **equal payout for 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th**, the chance of you winning some money is not so bad, so your chips are worth a little more in terms of \$ overall.

Think about it, would you rather take a player's 100 chips when only 1st place pays or if 4 places pay equally (with 5 players left at the table)? You're going to see a better ROI (../../roi/) in the long run by taking the player's chips when 4 places pay as opposed to 1.

In the following section I will use the ICM idea of each chip being worth something in terms of \$ for working out our overall **prize pool equity** based on the size of our chip stack.

Using ICM to work out prize pool equity.

If you have 5,000 chips and player B and C each have 2,500 chips, how much is your 5,000 going to win for you in the long run?

In a tournament it's not like we can cash out our chips at any time for what we think they're worth. We have to continue playing to see whether we take down 1st, 2nd or 3rd prize in the tournament. Of course, the more chips we have compared to the other players the more likely it is we will win one of the top prizes.

To put it another way, using the ICM we work out our **prize pool equity**, which is the amount of money we expect to win from the tournament on average based on:

- The current size of our stack.
- The current size of the other players' stacks.
- The amount of money in the prize pool and how much you get for coming 1st, 2nd, 3rd and so on (prize pool distribution).

Basic prize pool equity example.

At the very beginning of a \$20 tournament before any cards are dealt, each player has the same stack size and therefore will have the exact same equity of \$20 in the tournament. Easy enough. To give another similar example...

There are 4 players left at the table in a \$10+\$1 SnG at PokerStars. The total prize pool is \$100 with a standard 1st, 2nd and 3rd payout of \$50, \$30 and \$20 (but that's kinda irrelevant for this example). If all the players have an equal amount of chips, their prize pool equity would be exactly the same:

- **Player A:** (2,500 chips) = \$25 equity.
- **Player B:** (2,500 chips) = \$25 equity.
- **Player C:** (2,500 chips) = \$25 equity.
- **Player D:** (2,500 chips) = \$25 equity.

This equity business obviously gets more complicated as each player's chip stack varies, but I hope this gives you a basic idea of prize pool equity.

How to work out prize pool equity.

As we have just mentioned, we want to work out how much \$ equity we have in the tournament based on the size of our stack and our opponents' stack sizes.

When we work out our prize pool equity all we care about is the current size of the stacks. We then use that information to work out how much money each player is expected to win from the tournament on average. The more chips you have, the more money you are likely to win.

Each individual player's skill is not factored in to the equation. It's quite basic, but the more chips you have the higher the probability is that you're going to win one of the top prizes.

Furthermore, ICM doesn't factor in any luck that will be involved in the tournament. We're just looking at stack sizes for an indication of how much money each player will be winning on average, nothing else.

Working out prize pool equity example.

We're at the final stages of a \$10+\$1 Sit and Go tournament with 3 other players (we are Player A). The stack sizes and SnG payout's are as follows:

- **(HERO) Player A** - 5,000
 - **Player B** - 2,500
 - **Player C** - 2,500
-
- **1st place** - \$50
 - **2nd place** - \$30
 - **3rd place** - \$20

As you can guess, Player A will have the most prize pool equity and players B and C will have an equal amount of prize pool equity. Now, I could work the prize pool equity for each player out by hand by doing a bunch of mathematics, but I'm not going to do this for 3 reasons:

1. It requires a hefty amount of mathematics and it's quite possibly the least fun thing to work out in the world.
2. You're never going to want to work it out by yourself anyway. It just takes ages.
3. ICM calculators make working out prize pool equity super easy.

I'm going to input the numbers in to this awesome [ICM calculator](http://pokerbank.com/chimp/) (<http://pokerbank.com/chimp/>), and skip to the results. I might create a walkthrough to working out ICM by hand in the future, but until then this ICM calculator is good enough for now.

So, I input the prize pool structure and the chip stacks and let the ICM calculator do the magic:

Each player's equity results.

- **Player A:** (5,000 chips) = **\$38.33** equity.
 - **Player B:** (2,500 chips) = **\$30.83** equity.
 - **Player C:** (2,500 chips) = **\$30.83** equity.
-

Therefore, with 5,000 chips Player A expects to win \$38.33 from the tournament on average. Player B expects to win \$30.83 on average and so on.

Try playing with the ICM calculator yourself to see how much money you expect to win on average from different payout structures based on how many chips you and your opponents have. It's pretty cool.

Evaluation of ICM.

So that's a quick overview of the independent chip model and ICM for you. Nothing groundbreaking, but the sole intention of this article was to give you a basic understanding of the independent chip model and prize pool equity.

Working out each player's equity in the tournament is cool and stuff, but this information isn't very practical just yet. In the next step I'm going to use this information to work out whether or not you should risk chips by calling all-ins toward the end of a tournament.

The [how to use ICM in tournaments \(../how/\)](#) article will essentially help you to answer the question "is the risk worth the reward?" when faced with tricky all-in decisions in Sit and Go tournaments.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](#).

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Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

I have to say that was a very detailed post. Not the easiest read, but it should come in handy for my next poker game. Thanks for posting.

G

Greg

0 points · 11 years ago

Thank you! I can promise you it's not the easiest write either haha.

I'm glad the information is digestible – just about.

M **Michel Lemieux**
0 points · 10 years ago

Nice post! Where can I get a hold on the actual formula used to calculate each player's equity using ICM?

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This is the difference between cEV and \$EV, where \$EV is going to be a far more profitable way to look at expected value in tournaments. \$EV is pretty much the whole basis of the article, so do not worry if you do not understand what I mean by this term just yet. It will become clearer as we go along.

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When faced with a tough decision, we want to work out whether calling increases our overall prize pool equity.

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- (CO) Player D - 3,500

Everyone folds to the SB who pushes all in for 2,000 chips. We know for a fact that this guy is stupidly aggressive and could well be pushing all-in with any two cards. So should we call or should we fold? Well, we need to do 3 things:

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1) *Work out our equity.*

Let's start with the basics and work out the % chance of winning our ATo hand has against our opponent's any 2 cards. If we input this in to [PokerStove \(../.../tools/software/pokerstove/\)](https://pokerstove.com/), we find that our hand has **62.7% equity against their range.**

See the articles on [range \(../.../concepts/rem/range/\)](https://pokerstove.com/concepts/rem/range/) and [range equity \(../.../concepts/rem/equity/\)](https://pokerstove.com/concepts/rem/equity/) for more information on this particular topic.

Hand Distribution			Equity
Player 1	$\frac{R}{D}$	ATo	62.722%
Player 2	$\frac{R}{D}$	random	37.278%

Therefore, we can say that:

- There is a 62.7% chance that we will increase our stack to 4,000 chips.
- There is a 37.3% chance that we will lose all of our chips and leave the tournament with nothing.

Calling seems a little bit risky already, but let's move on to the next step to see whether or not it's actually going to be profitable to make this call over the long run.

2) *Work out the different changes in prize pool equity.*

To work this out we are going to require the use of our trusty [ICM calculator](http://pokerbank.com/chimp/) (<http://pokerbank.com/chimp/>). To work out the change in our prize pool equity and which action is most profitable, we will need to work out 3 things:

1. Our equity if we call and win.
2. Our equity if we call and lose.
3. Our equity if we fold to the all-in.

In the following quick examples I'm going to omit the blinds. I could include them, but it just makes following the example a lot easier for you if I leave them out for now.

Our equity if we call and win.

If we call and win, our chip stack increases to 4,000 and Player B gets knocked out. Using the ICM calculator the new prize pool equity between the 3 players would be:

-
- **Player A:** (4,000 chips) = **\$35.49** equity. <- Our prize pool equity if we call and win.
 - **Player B:** (0 chips) = **\$0** equity.
 - **Player C:** (2,500 chips) = **\$30.51** equity.
 - **Player D:** (3,500 chips) = **\$34** equity.
-

Our equity if we call and lose.

If we lose we are out of the tournament, so as you can guess our prize pool equity will be \$0. I'll post the equity results anyway just to keep things consistent.

-
- **Player A:** (0 chips) = **\$0** equity. <- Our prize pool equity if we call and lose.
 - **Player B:** (4,000 chips) = **\$35.49** equity.
 - **Player C:** (2,500 chips) = **\$30.51** equity.
 - **Player D:** (3,500 chips) = **\$34** equity.
-

Our equity if we fold.

If we fold, our equity decreases a little because of the 200 chips we had to put in for the big blind.

-
- **Player A:** (1,800 chips) = **\$20.29** equity. <- Our prize pool equity if we fold to the all-in.
 - **Player B:** (2,200 chips) = **\$23.48** equity.
 - **Player C:** (2,500 chips) = **\$25.50** equity.
 - **Player D:** (3,500 chips) = **\$30.73** equity.
-

3) Work out if we increase our prize pool equity by calling.

So then, which action is more profitable? Calling or folding?

If we fold, our equity drops to **\$20.29**.

If we call, 63% of the time we are going to move our equity up to \$35.49 and 37% of the time our equity will drop to \$0. So if we calculate our average total prize pool equity from calling we get:

Total prize pool equity = $(0.63 * 35.49) + (0.37 * 0) = \mathbf{\$22.36}$.

So, comparing the two:

- Folding = **\$20.29**.
- Calling = **\$22.36**.

As you can see, our overall prize pool equity **increases** by calling this all-in bet. Therefore, it is more profitable to call with ATo over the long run against any random hand than it is to fold and save our chips. Even though on average every time we call we are only earning an extra \$2.07, calling remains as the optimum play in this particular situation.

| If your total prize pool equity decreases by calling, you should fold.

| If your total prize pool equity increases by calling, you should call.

Evaluation of using ICM in Sit and Go tournaments.

Now I know what you're all thinking... how the hell am I supposed to work all of this out in the middle of a tournament? Well, in all honesty you can't, but this doesn't mean that learning about ICM has no value.

Making decisions using the independent chip model and prize pool equity is useful for post-game analysis and helping you to gauge risk vs. reward situations near the bubble. ICM is basically the theory behind the common concern of "is it worth risking all my chips in this spot?". The more you familiarize yourself with this concept, the more adept you will be at making the correct play in tricky situations.

I know that this has been a pretty long article, but trust me, if I could have made it any shorter I would have done! All ICM decisions boil down to at the end of the day are the 2 simple steps of working out your equity against your opponent's hand range, then working out whether your prize pool equity increases or decreases by calling.

To reiterate the two important concluding points of using ICM:

| If your total prize pool equity decreases by calling, you should fold.

| If your total prize pool equity increases by calling, you should call.

Easy, right?

Further reading on the independent chip model (ICM).

- ICM by HoldemReview.com (<https://www.holdemreview.com/using-icm-in-sit-and-gos/>).
- Introduction to ICM by SitandGoPlanet.com
(https://www.sitandgoplanet.com/sitandgo/sng_bubble/Introduction_to%20ICM.html).

This article is long enough, but if I didn't cover everything or explain a few points too well, you may benefit reading up on the same topic from other talented writers. You might find that you respond better to other writers' teaching methods, or that reading the same idea from a different perspective helps to reinforce a few key points.

Either way, I have found the 3 articles above to be the most useful for learning about ICM.

Go back to the awesome Texas Hold'em Strategy (</strategy/>).

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? **Anonymous**

0 points · 13 years ago

Great article. But why you don't loose your big blind when you fold it?

G

Greg

0 points · 13 years ago

Good catch xander. I totally forgot about the fact that we will have t200 less thanks to the big blind. I've updated the article with the correct stack sizes and prize pool equities when we fold.

? **Anonymous**

0 points · 11 years ago

if your opponent pushes all in for 1,000 chips with AQ and you call with AK, you expect on average to make 480 chips every time you call this all in. Please explain?

?

Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

I'm pretty sure it is closer to \$751.70 because it should be about 71.72% to win, 4.59% to tie and 23.69% to lose. So $(71.72/95.41) \cdot 1000 \sim 751.70$. That being said, the rest of this article looked excellent.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

The losses need to be subtracted from the wins. That brings the ev to ~ 480.



Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

which can be done very easily in the head :

win ~ 72%. loose ~ 23% so $72 - 23 = 49$ ish

so u win +49% of what u push all in with. if its 100 stacks u have, u average on a 149.

another example: AA vs KK

AA wins 80% loses 20%. $80 - 20 = 60$

so if u go all in with 100, u can expect to average 160. less than u'd think, right ?



Chris

0 points · 8 years ago

Chip EV. AKo has equity of 74.02% against AQo, which has equity 25.98%. Payoff is 1000 chips if you win, and -1000 chips if you lose.

Therefore EV = $(0.7402 \cdot 1000) + (0.2598 \cdot -1000) = 480.4$. Which rounds to 480.



Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

let me rephrase the previous question since theres no response. How would I go about using the ICM calculator when playing 180 man sit n go? when and where in the tourney is this appropriate.



Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

Thanks, cleared up everything I needed to know. There's also an app (cell, tablet) to help you compute all this cra... stuff on the fly in the real world. Eventually, as with computing it practicing anything, it becomes second nature, and yup can lose the training wheels...in a



Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

- * Player A: (1,800 chips) = \$20.11 equity. <- Our prize pool equity if we fold to th
- * Player B: (2,300 chips) = \$24.01 equity.
- * Player C: (2,500 chips) = \$25.32 equity.
- * Player D: (3,500 chips) = \$30.56 equity.

If the blind is 100/200 and player B shoves and player A folds, that would give player B = 2200 chips instead of 2300, otherwise there would suddenly be 10100 chips in play :) ?

Isn't that correct?

G

Greg

0 points · 13 years ago

You're right. Thanks TDK!

?

Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

How do we use the ICM calculator when playing 180 player sit n go with 18 places? Lets say there are only 18 players left, there is only 10 spaces for both the prize% and player slots, and do we use the Initial chips or the Total chips and how do we get the total chips for this tourny? By the way I'm using C.H.I.M.P. Thx and look forward to your reply.

R

Rob

0 points · 7 years ago

In the above example, say player C is guaranteed to shove on the button with ATC and we are the hero in the CO trying to work the ICM situation with our ATo - what is the correct EV calculation? Working out the ICM position of each scenario is straight forward with CHIMP.

Starting situation: Chips \$equity

(BB) Player A - 2,000 \$21.92

(SB) Player B - 2,000 \$21.92

(BTN) Player C - 2,500 \$25.46

(CO Hero) Player D - 3,500 \$30.71

If blinds fold and D wins:

(BB) Player A - 1,800 \$28.89

(SB) Player B - 1,900 \$29.35

(BTN) Player C - 0

(CO Hero) Player D - 6,300 \$41.76

If blinds fold and D loses:

(BB) Player A - 1,800 \$23.21

(SB) Player B - 1,900 \$23.98

(BTN) Player C - 5,300 \$38.18

(CO Hero) Player D - 1,000 \$14.63

If blinds fold and D folds:

(BB) Player A - 1,800 \$20.46

(SB) Player B - 1,900 \$21.31

(BTN) Player C - 2,800 \$27.40
(CO Hero) Player D - 3,500 \$30.83

Hopefully the formatting remains after submitting, but anyway, the long and short of those tables is that the ICM equity calc gives the hero's equity as \$30.83 if he folds, \$14.63 if he loses (0.37 chance of that) and \$41.76 if he wins (0.63 chance of that).

Is the correct EV calculation $(0.63 * \$41.76) + (0.37 * \$14.63) = \$31.72??$ It seems odd to add both terms together because if you have any chips left after losing (which means you have some equity in the prize pool), a proportion of your loss equity is always ADDED to your win equity making a bet or call more likely to be more EV than a fold. ?? Isn't that biasing you towards a bet/call? Appreciate some thoughts!

Interesting to note that folding is +EV for the big stack.

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Turbo Poker Tournament Strategy

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

Turbo poker tournaments are becoming increasingly popular at online poker rooms. You can usually get a nice mix of turbo, super turbo and occasionally extreme turbo poker tournaments at the majority of the top online rooms.

As you can guess, these *turbo Sit and Go tournaments* do not last for long, and so they attract the players who are looking for some fast entertainment at the poker tables.

Now, these particular tournaments with their unique (and pretty speedy) blind structures can be tricky to play, and so require a certain strategy that is quite different to your standard [Sit and Go tournament strategy \(/basic-sng/\)](#).



Basic turbo poker tournament strategy.

The turbo poker tournaments are not impossible to beat, but the fact that the pace is so fast means that they require a little more luck than your standard SnG tournament. This is because you are essentially playing [short stack poker \(/../general/short-stack/\)](#) a lot of the time in these games, which means that a lot of your plays are going to be reduced to all-in or fold decisions.

There is very little room for post flop play in these games, and after the first few rounds you will not be playing much poker after the flop, as you are likely to be all in by this point. So in a nutshell, **good turbo poker tournament strategy is going to involve good [starting hand selection \(/../basic/starting-hand-selection/\)](#) and picking the right spots to move in.** It can be pretty frustrating having the risk all your chips so frequently, but it's the way these games are played and how to play them successfully.

There is no doubt that you are going to experience a lot of variance ([../other/variance/](#)) in these games, so don't expect to see results after a handful of tournaments. You really need to play a large amount of these games to be able to consistently win money, so get used to some pretty big swings if you decide that you want to regularly play in turbo tournaments.

You will need to play a larger number of turbo tournaments before you start to see honest results.

Early stage strategy.

- Avoid getting involved with meaningless pots.
- Stick with strong hands that you would back up with your stack.
- Don't be surprised to come up against wild plays early on.

The early stage of these turbo tournaments is going to be your only opportunity to play 'proper poker', as the blinds are going to be small in relation to the size of the stacks. This will only last for 2 or 3 levels depending on how quickly the blinds move, but up until the big blind becomes around 1/10th the size of your starting stack, you can be prepared to play hands without having to resort to drastic moves.

However, at the early stages of these tournaments, **I'm not going to look to try and steal blinds or pick up small pots, as they are going to have very little effect on the outcome of the tournament.** If I've got a strong hand I'm going to raise a big amount and hope to catch someone over playing a weak ace and try and force them to put as much in the middle as possible, but this is no time to try and pick up small pots with fancy plays.

The fact that these tournaments run so quickly means that the players at the table will already be in a gambling frame of mind, and will be willing to risk a lot or all of their stack even when the blinds are so small. Therefore whenever I am dealt a hand, I am always going to consider whether or not it is one that I would back up with my whole stack. If not, then the chances are that I am going to fold.

Middle stage strategy.

- Not much room for movement, so be prepared to risk your entire stack on a hand.
- Avoid trying to get tricky with marginal holdings, just stick with the big hands.
- The stop and go play can be very effective in certain situations at this stage.

As with any stage of turbo tournaments, starting hand selection is going to play a huge role in the middle stages of a tournament. If the general [stack size \(../concepts/stack-sizes/\)](#) means that players have between 7 and 12 big blinds, you are in the middle stage of the game. This will allow for a two raises before one player is going to be all-in, so there really is not much room to move around.

In general, **if I am entering a pot, then I am entering with the intention of playing for my entire stack**. If I am becoming low on chips, the blinds are likely to be valuable enough to pick up, so a solid all-in push from late [position \(../basic/position/\)](#) may well be a good plan of action from time to time. Other than this however, I am going to stick to playing with premium hands, but widening my starting range up in late position.

At this stage, you can effectively start to use the [stop and go play \(../plays/stop-and-go/\)](#). This will help increase your chances of winning a hand if you are prepared to push your entire stack in the middle, but don't feel that it will push your opponent off the hand. It may be a good idea to call a raise and push it in [on the flop \(../hand-guide/flop/\)](#), as a small all-in reraise preflop will often give your opponent the right odds to call.

Late stage strategy.

- Play [aggressively \(../general/aggression/\)](#) and don't be afraid to bully opponents.
- Take advantage of players who tighten up.
- You will miss out on the money a lot of the time, but don't let it get to you. Shoot for 1st.

When you have 6 big blinds or less, you are going to be in all-in or fold mode. It is likely that there are very few players left in the game, and so you should be happy to push with a much wider range or starting hands.

Don't be too afraid to stick it all in the middle because of the bubble, as you will be able to take advantage of the players who are going fold a number of good hands just so that they can try and sneak there way in to the money.

Play to win the tournament by taking 1st place, rather than playing it overly safe and trying to make it into the money.

If you can show no fear of being bubbled, you will be able to pick up a large number of pots and set yourself up to be in a good position to win the tournament. There will be times when you just miss out on the money because of being so aggressive, but there will also be times where you win enough to take the tournament down, so show no fear.

For help with those tough all-in decisions, try learning [how to use the independent chip model \(../icm/how/\)](#).

If you can get passed the fear and frustration of constantly risking your stack, you will be able to make optimum plays and get the better of the luck-heavy turbo poker tournaments.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](#).

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Matthew Mowery

0 points · 7 years ago

plese send my turbo

P

Philippe S

0 points · 12 years ago

Great article, I don't agree about playing only strong hands on the beginning. IMO, it's a good time in the beginning to test the reactions of the other players with some LAG plays, even if you lose 1/3 of your chips. after that, when blinds go up, you can easily rebuild you stack by switching to TAG strategy and combining this with the intel you've gathered on the opponents. My short handed turbos often goes from 1500 to 750/1000 then jump to 3000/4000 easily. Also, when short stacked, opponents expect you to loosen you game and play scared poker when you do exactly the opposite. This is tricky but this has proven succesful for me so far.

J

Josh

0 points · 10 years ago

11

0 points · 9 years ago

nice. Thank you for sharing with us.

Sticking to Poker Basics (<http://www.oddsandpots.com/basics-of-poker/>).

0 points · 7 years ago

Thank you for the article! I read it right before a turbo which is not my strong suit I like the deepstack long levels. Used the stop and go strategy. Works like a charm, fifth for \$600 of 52; final table with three professionals

Powered by **Commento**(<https://commento.io>).

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Sit and Go Poker ROI

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#)

SNG Player? Find out which poker rooms have the [softest sit and go games \(/rooms/games/sng/\)](#) in 2023.

I'm sure you've all bumped in to the term "ROI" before, and you're probably aware that it stands for **R**eturn **O**n **I**vestment. It sounds like one of those terms you'll hear thrown around inside a business meeting along with the word "synergy".

So what's ROI got to do with *poker tournaments* exactly? Well, allow me to explain in this guide to everything you need to know about **ROI in poker**.



What is SnG ROI?

ROI is your average profit from sit and go's. Your ROI is shown as a percentage of your SNG buy-in + entry fee.

So for example, if you have a ROI of 10% in \$10+\$1 SNGs, you are making an average profit of \$1.10 from each of these games you play.

Note: ROI **does** take in to account the money paid in tournament fees.

If you're a cash game player, check out my [poker winrates \(/../other/winrate/\)](#) article for info on the "ROI" of cash games.

How to work out your poker ROI.

You work out your *return on investment in poker* just as you would work out ROI in any other field (http://www.ehow.com/how_2311286_calculate-roi.html). .

Divide your profit by your total investment, then multiply that number by 100 to get the ROI percentage.

$$\text{ROI} = \frac{\text{PROFIT}}{\text{INVESTMENT}} \times 100$$

(Winnings - Investment)

(Buy In + Fee)

Equations always look more complicated than they really are.

For example, if you entered a 9-seater \$10+\$1 SNG at PokerStars and won the first prize of \$45, your ROI for that one game would be:

- **Profit** = \$45 - \$11 = \$34
- **Investment** = \$11
- **ROI** = (\$34 / \$11) x 100 = 309%

This is obviously an extremely high ROI, and it's far from sustainable (in reality you would struggle to maintain an average ROI of 25%). However, this is just an example to show how easy it is to work out ROI.

ROI is more commonly used when looking at your winnings over a much larger sample size.

What's a good sit and go ROI?

It's very hard to work out accurate (and attainable) ROIs. However, from my experience these percentages should give you a rough idea of what an impressive ROI would look like at each level of 9s SNGs:

Level	ROI
less than \$6	20%

Level	ROI
\$6 / \$11	15%
\$22	10%
\$33	7%
\$55	5%
\$109	4%
\$215	3%

These numbers are the upper limit of the sort of ROI you could hope for in SNG tournaments (/rooms/games/sng/), so don't be at all disappointed if your ROI is lower.

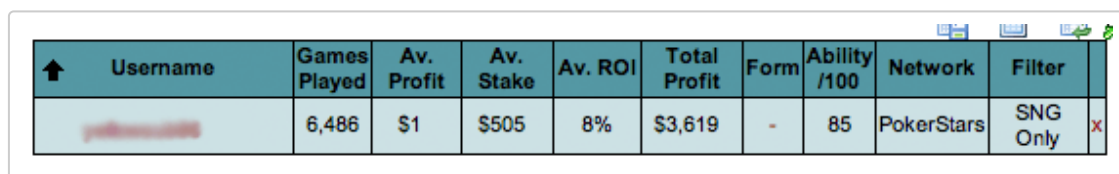
In all honesty, you should be proud of any ROI above 0%.

How can you find out your SNG ROI?

There are 3 ways:

1. **Sharkscope** (<http://www.sharkscope.com/>) - the simplest method, but not super accurate.
2. **Tracking software** (e.g. HEM..()) or PT (/visit/poker-tracker/) ..()) - the most accurate method, but you have to buy the software first.
3. **Notepad** - if all else fails.

1) Sharkscope.



↑ Username	Games Played	Av. Profit	Av. Stake	Av. ROI	Total Profit	Form	Ability /100	Network	Filter	
p0k3rman123	6,486	\$1	\$505	8%	\$3,619	-	85	PokerStars	SNG Only	x

(<http://www.sharkscope.com/>).

Sharkscope (<http://www.sharkscope.com/>) is a website that tracks the results of online poker tournaments. Just search for your username and it should (hopefully) give you an indication of your average ROI from the tournaments you have played online.

The stats are limited and they're not 100% accurate, but it's a very quick and easy way to get an idea of your overall ROI. It's also free, but only for up to 5 searches a day. If you want to perform more searches you have to pay to subscribe.

2) *Tracking software.*

Using tracking software like [Holdem Manager \(/visit/holdem-manager/\)](/visit/holdem-manager/) or Poker Tracker is the most accurate way of recording your results and finding your ROI across the different levels of SNGs you have played.

This [poker software \(/../tools/software/\)](/../tools/software/) costs money to buy, but they offer far more features than just the ability to record your results and calculate ROI. If you're serious about playing SNGs and trying to win money, I'd highly recommend you grab yourself a copy of Holdem Manager.

3) *Notepad.*

Nothing wrong with tracking results the old fashioned way!

It takes a little more effort than the other two options, but if you keep note of the number of games you've played and your winnings then you can easily work out your ROI for yourself.

SNG ROI and hourly rate.

Hourly rate is the amount of money you are making from SNGs on average per hour.

Knowing your ROI per game is nice, but for many the hourly rate is a more useful statistic. So how do you figure out your hourly rate?

Simple: **Find out how many SNGs you play on average in one hour, then multiply that number by your ROI.**

Quick example of ROI and hourly rate.

Let's say you have an ROI of 6% in \$11 SNGs. This means you are winning an average of **\$0.66 per game.**

Due to the fact that you multi-table frequently, you have worked out that you play an average of 8 SNGs an hour. Therefore:

- Hourly rate = ROI x SNGs per hour
- Hourly rate = \$0.66 x 8

- Hourly rate = **\$5.28**

So with your current ROI, you're earning \$5.28 an hour from multi-tabling SNGs. Not bad, but probably not worth quitting your day job over.

With this figure you could go on to work out how much you might earn on average in a day, a week, a month or even a year - which is handy. Check out my article on [how much can you win from online poker?](http://../../articles/questions/how-much-win/) (../../articles/questions/how-much-win/) for more calculations on this sort of stuff.

Average sit and go duration.

SNG Duration

9s	70 mins
18s	95 mins
27s	110 mins
45s	125 mins

These are very rough figures, and they can obviously vary from one poker site to the next (depending on tournament structure). Nonetheless, hopefully you can use these numbers to give you a rough idea of how many SNGs you might be able to squeeze in per hour on average.

If you have tracking software like [Holdem Manager](http://visit/holdem-manager/) ([/visit/holdem-manager/](http://visit/holdem-manager/)) on the other hand, it will work out your hourly rate for you.

How many SNGs do you have to play to get a reliable ROI?

1,000.

If you want to get a rough (there's that word again) idea of what your ROI might be for sit and go's, you want to have at least 1,000 SNGs under your belt.

Even then, your ROI from having played this many SNG tournaments isn't going to be set in stone either, as [variance](http://../../other/variance/) (../../other/variance/) can have a significant effect on your ROI over this sample size. However, 1,000 SNGs is widely regarded as the number you want to aim for before drawing any conclusions from or putting any stock in to your ROI.

To get a *good* idea of what your real ROI is though, you want to aim for 5,000 SNGs.

ROI reliability based on number of games played.

- 500 - a very rough idea.
- 1,000 - a rough idea.
- 5,000 - a good idea.

To prove this, watch this [video on ROI simulations on Youtube \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCe_1xDVScU\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCe_1xDVScU), or download and try the [poker ROI simulator \(ROI simulator.rar\)](#) out for yourself. Here's a link to the [original ROI simulator thread at 2+2 \(http://archives1.twoplustwo.com/showflat.php?Number=3218857\)](http://archives1.twoplustwo.com/showflat.php?Number=3218857). (it also has a quick guide to using the program).

For even more detailed information on the reliability of your ROI based on number of games played, feel free to wade through this article at 2+2 on [SNG Poker ROI confidence intervals \(http://archives2.twoplustwo.com/showthreaded.php?Cat=&Board=singletable&Number=1941324&fpart=&PHPSESSID=\)](http://archives2.twoplustwo.com/showthreaded.php?Cat=&Board=singletable&Number=1941324&fpart=&PHPSESSID=).

Factors that affect your ROI and hourly rate.

Your ability. The better you are at play SNGs, the higher your ROI will be from each game. This is where [Texas Hold'em strategy \(../../\)](#) comes in useful.

SNG level. The higher up the stakes you go, the better the players become. This will reduce your ROI (as shown above in the "what's a good ROI?" section).

Multi-tabling. [Multi-tabling \(../../general/multi-tabling/\)](#) may decrease your overall ROI per game, but if you're playing a greater number of SNGs profitably per hour it will increase your hourly rate.

Fees. The higher the entry fees are in the games you play, the lower your ROI will be. The fees are the reason why the \$5+\$1 SNGs at [Party Poker \(../..rooms/party/\)](#) back in the day were so difficult to beat.

Type of SNG. The Turbo SNG and Super Turbo SNG structures reduce the element of skill, which means that as a good player your ROI will suffer (blinds increase quickly, which leads to fewer pots player with high [SPRs \(../..concepts/spr/\)](#)). However, these games do not last as long as standard SNGs, so you will be able to play many more of them in an hour. Whether or not Turbo SNGs are generally more profitable than standard SNGs though is up for debate.

Which room you play at. If you play at a big poker room like [PokerStars \(../../rooms/pokerstars/\)](https://rooms.pokerstars/), the SNG tables are going to fill up quickly, which means less time spent waiting for games to start. This will improve your hourly rate. Conversely, if you play at a smaller room (maybe because of softer competition), you will likely spend more time waiting for the tournament tables to fill up. Whilst playing at the smaller room with the weaker players may well improve your ROI, it will have a negative effect on your hourly rate.

Evaluation of sit and go ROI.

- ROI stands for "Return On Investment". It helps you to find how much profit you're making from each SNG you play on average.
- Hourly rate is how much money you're making from playing SNGs an hour.
- An ROI greater than 0% is good.
- You need to play at least 1,000 SNGs to get a half-decent idea of what your long-term ROI might be.
- Download [Holdem Manager \(/visit/holdem-manager/\)](/visit/holdem-manager/) to keep track of the tournaments you play and to help you win money from the SNGs you play.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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A **Angila**
0 points · 9 years ago

I really found very interesting about SnG ROI topics because you have good content and unique thoughts on writing. So this might be useful to everyone. I really look forward some more updates. Thanks for sharing.

I have recently posted [Creating ROI Calculators \(http://www.quantumct.com/drive-new-revenue-growth-with-minimal-investment.html\)](http://www.quantumct.com/drive-new-revenue-growth-with-minimal-investment.html).

M **Marcio Ruaro**
0 points · 9 years ago

This was an excellent article. Helped me a lot about self evaluation on the game.

S **senja kelabu**
0 points · 6 years ago

Hey there, I'm Senja. I'm a doctor living in Surabaya, Indonesia.

I am a fan of [Poker Online \(https://goo.gl/Lpcvct\)](https://goo.gl/Lpcvct), [Bandar Togel \(http://bit.ly/2rYv2f6\)](http://bit.ly/2rYv2f6), and gaming. I'm also [interested in soccer and sports](#).

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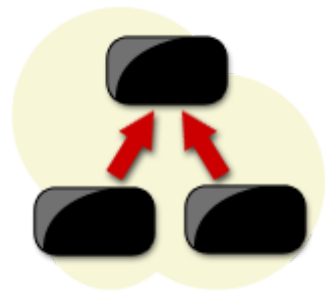
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Multi-Table Tournament Strategy

By Mark Holland

Multi-table poker tournaments (also known as MTTs for short) of all field sizes and buy-in levels can be found online 24 hours a day.

This article will cover basic multi-table tournament strategy at the various stages that a tournament will go through before the lucrative final table.



MTT prize pool structure.

We will start by looking at the key factor of how the prize pool in a multi-table online poker tournament is distributed – and the big influence this needs to have on your strategy in order to maximize your poker winnings over time. Next we go through the early, middle (including the bubble) and later stages of a poker tournament showing what factors influence your strategy at each point.

Tournament prize distribution is very ‘top heavy’. The **players who reach the final table will split up to half of the total prizes between them** – while those who make it into the first paying spots only will often win less than twice their initial buy-in. Even at the final table the top 3 paying places will give a disproportionately larger payout than the other places.

This has a large effect on tournament strategy for those players who are looking to maximize their long-term profits. [Aggressive \(../general/aggression/\)](#), positive play is rewarded at all stages of the tournament - by a shot at reaching the final table. Passive play during the later stages may enable you to sneak into the money positions – however this will not make up for just a few final table appearances when adding up profits at the end of the month or year.

Early stage tournament strategy.

In the very early stages of a poker tournament the game plays in a similar way to a cash game table. This is because the [stack sizes](https://www.pokernews.com/strategy/concepts/stack-sizes/) are many times the size of the blinds, allowing betting on the flop, turn and river for many hands. 'Deep Stacked' play involves its own adjustments including favoring hands which can make hidden 'monsters' such as small pairs and [suited connectors](https://www.pokernews.com/strategy/videos/splitsuit/suited-connectors/). Hands that are easily dominated such as Ace-Ten and King-Jack should generally be avoided at this stage.

Your strategy objective in the first few blind levels should be to accumulate chips from the weaker opponents who will still be in the tournament at this stage. At the same time you should avoid big 'gambles' for all of your chips if you feel that your skill advantage will have time to show over a larger number of small pots.

One saying for the early stages of multi-table tournaments is that 'you need to take the chips from the weak players before someone else does' – after all they will be harder to take from a stronger opponent later down the line.

Transitioning from early to late stages.

As the blinds and antes get higher when compared to the average stacks your tournament strategy needs to adjust to new conditions. Since you must invest more chips to see a flop the value of the speculative hands played in the early stages goes down.

High cards however go up in value when you are the first to enter the pot. Since calling a raise in the middle stages requires investing a large proportion of your stack this should be avoided where possible. Your opponents are often in the same situation – meaning that you're raising requirements can be 'lighter' than before, especially from late position.

Playing on the bubble.

The bubble is the stage of the tournament where just a few players need to be eliminated in order to reach the money paying places. At this stage the single most important factor affecting your strategy are stack sizes – both your own and those of your opponents.

Having a large stack at the bubble will allow you to pick up many pots uncontested – as players will be less likely to fight with a big stack when they risk busting out before the money. Other big stacks and very [short stacks](https://www.pokernews.com/strategy/general/short-stack/) should be avoided here, as they are more

likely to call you.

If you have a medium stack at the bubble then you can use the knowledge that bigger stacks are likely to steal pots to your advantage. If you are dealt a reasonably strong hand and expect the big stack to be 'raising light' you can have a positive expectation situation for a re-raise. Sure you will get unlucky and bust out sometimes – but your strategy for the whole tournament is to reach the final table and doubling up could give you a chance to do so, more than making up for losing the small 'in the money' payout.

After the bubble 'bursts' players will often loosen up considerably in an effort to accumulate enough chips to reach the final table. At this stage you need to choose your spots carefully. As with all forms of poker it is better to be the raiser rather than the caller.

MTT final table strategy.

The final table brings in yet another factor into your poker strategy thinking. Stack sizes are still very important, but now the payout structure – and your opponent's strategy in relation to this come to the fore.

The presence of a very small stack is a good example of how this affects the dynamic of the final table. Medium stacks will see that one player is just 1 big blind away from busting and will tighten up to avoid going out before this player. This can lead to some great opportunities to pick up chips without too much risk.

Aggressive and positive poker are again the key elements to success at this stage of the poker tournament. The top three places will pay proportionately more than the rest – aim high by picking fights with those opponents who look like they would like to move up in the money. Big stacks and small stacks should again be avoided, the medium stacks are much more likely to fold to pressure at this stage.

MTT strategy evaluation.

In summary, tournament strategy involves adjusting to the various stages which a poker tournament will go through. At the same time your goal in every tournament should be to reach the final table. Busting on the bubble never feels good – however if for each time you bubble you reach another final table then your long-term profits will be better than that of opponents who tighten up in order to make the money.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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Basic Sit and Go Tournament Strategy

By Mark Holland

SNG Player? Check out my rankings of the [best sit and go poker sites \(/rooms/games/sng/\)](/rooms/games/sng/) for 2023.

A Sit and Go (SNG) is a small poker tournament, typically just a single table, with no officially scheduled start time – when enough players join the tournament will begin. SNG tournaments have become extremely popular online and are available at a wide range of buy-in levels from just a few dollars into the 1000's.



This article will cover the **basics of SNG strategy** by going through the various stages of a one-table tournament and showing how strategy changes.

We start by giving an overview of the differences between SNG strategy and that for [cash games \(/rooms/games/cash/\)](/rooms/games/cash/). Next the 4 main stages of a SNG tournament are discussed separately, covering early game, mid-game, bubble play and finally in the money play. We wrap up by looking at some common opponent errors.

Difference between tournament and cash game strategy.

There are 2 key differences between SNG and cash game strategy.

1. The relationship between [stack sizes \(/.../concepts/stack-sizes/\)](/.../concepts/stack-sizes/) and the increasing blind levels in SNG tournaments.

2. The way in which profits are made and the resulting relationship between chip value and equity.

Cash game poker players typically play with 'deep stacks' in relation to the blinds. This means that betting occurs throughout a hand, giving you time to assess the strength of your opponent's holdings. Sit and Go strategy starts with deep stacks but before long the stacks are shallow in relation to the blinds – often 10 times the blind or less.

This means that instead of distinct hands, SNG play deals with ranges of hands – the optimal play is to take (often small) mathematical ([../mathematics/](#)) edges against the range of hands opponents will call or raise with. For players used to cash games, SNGs can seem like an unskilled version of poker – however those players who are adept at working with both ranges and prize pool equity have a significant and profitable edge.

In a cash game the chips in your stack are worth exactly the dollar value assigned to them. Through the various stages of a SNG tournament the chips you hold will actually change value. This is due to the fact that the player who eventually wins all the chips will not win all of the prize money.

Typically SNG tournaments pay 50% for 1st, 30% for 2nd and 20% for 3rd. If 10 players start a \$10 SNG with 1,000 chips then each chip is worth 1c at the start of the game. At the end the winner has all 10,000 chips – however the prize pool distribution gives him \$50, meaning each chip is worth 0.5c. Awareness of the changing value of chips and mathematics of prize pool equity are most important at the bubble, when just 1 player must bust before the money.

The different stages of SNG tournaments.

Early stage.

The early stages of SNG tournaments are characterized by solid and tight poker. At this stage the blinds will be small and stacks deep. The reason that tight play is optimal in the early stages is due to a mid-game and bubble play dynamic known as 'fold equity' ([../mathematics/equity/fold/](#)). Since the ability to get opponents to fold in the later stages when the blinds are relatively high is so important to the game, tight play early is the norm to ensure that you keep enough chips for the middle stages.

Middle stage.

As the blinds get higher and number of remaining opponents begins to drop SNG play becomes more aggressive ([../general/aggression/](#)). The middle stages are characterized by stealing blinds, raises and re-raises. In a cash game defending your blind is not critical to success (though necessary sometimes), in a SNG tournament blind defence ([/videos/wilcox/articles/calling-from-blinds-vs-steal/](#)) is critical – as is the ability to use the threat of elimination to steal chips from your opponents.

Late stage (bubble).

The bubble is the most strategic part of any SNG tournament. With just one player to go before the paying places these tournaments often become a battle of nerves as one player pushes all in and the others fold. The key strategy consideration now is that you need a much better hand to call an all-in bet than you need to move all-in yourself (see the gap concept ([../concepts/gap-concept/](#))). The reason is the diminishing value of chips.

Example of the diminishing value of chips in SNGs.

- If 4 players each have 2500 chips at the bubble then their 'prize pool equity' is \$25.
- However, when 2 players get all in and one wins the pot, those 5000 chips are not worth \$50 (more like \$35).
 - (This is because the double stack does not guarantee 1st place.)
- So when calling an all in bet you are risking \$25 worth of chips in an effort to win an additional \$10.
- Thus you need a hand that is **proportionally better than the raisers range** – a tall order without a premium holding.

Once the bubble has burst and the remaining 3 players are in the money paying places strategy changes once again. Since the blinds are now huge in relation to the stack sizes all-in bets are again the norm. However without the risk of elimination players both raise and call raises with much weaker holdings.

Adjusting to this is dependant on specific opponents. However newer SNG players need to be aware that any pair, most aces and any 2 'face cards' become very strong at this stage. See the article on short stack strategy ([../general/short-stack/](#)) for more information on this topic.

A common early mistake.

Common errors to watch out for in SNG tournaments include overplaying easily dominated hands early – for example ace-X ([ace rag](#) ([../hands/rag-aces/](#))) hands where the X is jack or lower.

Failing to defend your blinds during the tournament, and calling bets at the bubble without very strong holdings are also errors. The ability to accurately assess the range of hands which individuals will raise and call raises with is a key skill in SNG tournaments and worth spending the time to learn.

For more advanced SNG tournament strategy, try the [what is ICM?](#) ([../icm/what/](#)) and [how to use ICM](#) ([../icm/how/](#)) articles.

Sit and Go strategy overview.

In summary, SNG strategy is all about 3 interacting factors. Your ability to adapt to the changing game conditions ([changing gears](#) ([../general/changing-gears/](#))), an understanding of how prize pool equity changes the value of chips and the ability to accurately assess the calling and raising ranges of your opponents. These factors are at their most important during bubble play – this is where the majority of a good SNG player profit is derived from.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy](#) ([/strategy/](#)).

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aeJones Theorem

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#)

[Poker Theorems \(/strategy/theorems/\)](#): [aeJones](#) | [Baluga \(/strategy/theorems/baluga/\)](#) | [Clarkmeister \(/strategy/theorems/clarkmeister/\)](#) | [Fundamental \(/strategy/theorems/fundamental/\)](#) | [Yeti \(/strategy/theorems/yeti/\)](#) | [Zeebo \(/strategy/theorems/zeebo/\)](#)

As with the majority of theorems, the aeJones theorem was name after a poster at the 2+2 forums named "aeJones" - surprise surprise. This theorem is actually pretty tongue-in-cheek, but I'm going to discuss it anyway.

The aeJones theorem states that:

“*No one ever has anything.*”

aeJones
theorem

[aeJones, twoplustwo.com forums \(http://archives1.twoplustwo.com/showthreaded.php?Cat=0&Number=9997660&an=0&page=0\)](http://archives1.twoplustwo.com/showthreaded.php?Cat=0&Number=9997660&an=0&page=0)

Aaron "aeJones" Jones used to coaches at a training site called LeggoPoker.

A pretty broad and straightforward statement I know, but let's have a think about it anyway...

Is aeJones' theorem effective?

If you take it literally, no. The chances are that you didn't need me to tell you that, but it's good to make sure that everyone knows where they stand. If you use the aeJones theorem during play, you will lose money.

But still, that's not to say that we can't salvage something useful from this theorem.

The idea behind the aejones theorem.

The driving force behind the aejones theorem is the following:

- Players do not always have as strong a hand as you think they do.
- Betting, raising and general aggression ([../general/aggression/](#)), is often enough to make your opponent fold.

Whilst there is an element of truth in both of these points, if you go all out betting and raising as the theorem advocates, you are not going to be winning much money. Of course there will be times when you win pots due to your aggression forcing other players to fold, but this style of play is just going to land you in very unfortunate spots time and time again.

Taken literally, the aejones theorem suggests that wild raises and calls are the order of the day at the Texas Hold'em ([/](#)) poker tables, and we both know that isn't the case for any successful poker player.

What can you learn from the aejones theorem?

If you take this theorem with an industrial size grain of salt, you might be able to walk away from this article with a slightly improved outlook on the game. If you ignore the disorderliness of the basic theorem, I think that you can actually take two useful things from it:

- Your opponent is not always going to have the absolute nuts.
- Playing aggressive poker is much better than playing passively.

First of all, understanding that your opponents will not always have the absolute nuts when they are betting into you will serve you well when it comes to analyzing plays and making decisions. Because we never know the exact two cards our opponent holds, it's easy to fear the worst when facing a bet, when the fact of the matter is that our opponent may be just as scared of what we are holding.

The core of the aejones theorem is that players can often give too much credit for what their opponent is holding.

I am not suggesting that you should think that you can always force your opponents to fold with a reraise, but simply to remember that both players in a hand have concerns about what their opponent holds. If you can sensibly take advantage of this mutual caution during play, you might be able to pick up a few extra pots.

Secondly, as you should know, aggressive poker is winning poker. You don't win pots big pots and make opponents fold by playing passively, so always try and play poker with controlled aggression. Have a browse over the article on the [importance of aggression \(../general/aggression/\)](http://general/aggression/) in poker for more information on this topic.

Who is aejones?

Aaron "aejones" Jones was/is a very high stakes professional poker player. Aaron used to record training videos for [LeggoPoker.com \(https://leggopoker.com\)](https://leggopoker.com) (no longer running), which was a popular online poker training site.

If you're feeling a little stalker-ish and want to check up on aejones' past, you can read all of his previous posts and threads at the 2+2 forums through [aejones' 2+2 member account \(https://forumserver.twoplustwo.com/members/39072/\)](https://forumserver.twoplustwo.com/members/39072/) .

"aejones theorem" overview.

Despite the fact that the aejones is very tongue-in-cheek, it does actually bring up a few subtle but useful points if you look hard enough.

This article may or may not have changed your outlook on the game, but either way the aejones theorem is one that I thought was worth discussing to try and extract some good from it, in addition to clearing up any confusion with what the theorem implies.

At the end of the day though, just be sure to not take this theorem literally, and certainly do not use it the next time you sit down at the tables.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](http://strategy/).

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The Yeti Theorem

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

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The "Yeti theorem" is quite an old theorem in poker that was coined by a poster at the 2+2 forums some time ago. The theorem essentially states that:

“*“A 3-bet on a dry flop (preferably paired) is almost always a bluff.”*”



[Yeti Theorem, twoplustwo.com forums \(http://archives1.twoplustwo.com/showflat.php?Number=9285815\)](http://archives1.twoplustwo.com/showflat.php?Number=9285815). -- Not the original thread, but good enough.

This means that if the flop could not give anyone a possible flush or straight draw, if you re-raise an opponent and they raise you back, the chances are that they are bluffing.

Yeti theorem example.

Let's say that you are heads up against an opponent and you are first to act. The flop has come 8♦ 3♠ 3♣. It does not really matter what cards you are holding or what happened before the flop, so just take it as it is.

We check to our opponent and they bet out – perfectly standard. We then [check-raise \(/../plays/check-raise/\)](#) them and the action is back on our opponent, as they have to call our raise to see the next card. If our opponent once again raises this raise, then by using the Yeti theorem why can assume that they are almost always bluffing in this situation, and so we should be able to push all in and make them fold or call and show down the best hand.

How the Yeti theorem works.

So now we know the structure of the *Yeti theorem*, let's have a think about the ideas behind the Yeti theorem. We'll assume that the flop is still 8♦ 3♠ 3♣.

There are 2 key ideas that drive the Yeti theorem.

1. If our opponent had an 8, they would not have a strong enough hand to re-raise our check raise.
2. If our opponent had a 3, they would be more likely to trap and call as opposed to raising us again.

Take a few seconds to mull over these 2 ideas – it's easy to read over them but not fully take everything in, so make sure you have an idea of why these points make sense.

Our opponent has an 8.

If our opponent has an 8, their bet after we have checked to them makes perfect sense. They may well have the best hand and they will want to take the pot without giving us the opportunity to catch up if we missed. Now, if we check-raise it shows a great amount of strength, and it would easily appear as though we have a 3 or an over pair at least.

No Texas Hold'em (/) player with any common sense is going to be confident enough to call this check-raise with just an 8, let alone make another raise, which means that a 3-bet here would be totally out of place.

Our opponent has a 3.

If our opponent has a 3, the chances are that they will be more inclined to slowplay the hand as opposed to come out raising and re-raising on the flop. The flop bet is not a bad play, but a number of players are likely to check here in an attempt to trap their opponent due to the flop being so dry.

The most peculiar play according to the Yeti theorem would be the fact that they 3-bet with their 3-of-a-kind, because this would seem like too strong of a play, where calling and trapping would be the preferable option for the vast majority of players.

Is the Yeti theorem still effective?

In my honest opinion, the Yeti theorem is old and does not hold as much weight as it used to. So no, I wouldn't say that it is effective anymore.

There are two main problems with the Yeti theorem in Texas Hold'em:

- Players are far more aggressive these days, and 3-bets with strong hands are not entirely rare.
- Players are likely to 3-bet dry flops like 8♦ 3♠ 3♣ with overpairs.

The fact of the matter is that players are always looking to out-level their opponent (see [multiple level thinking \(../psychology/multiple-level-thinking/\)](https://www.psychology.com/multiple-level-thinking/)). Therefore **if your opponent knows that you think that your opponent is always bluffing when they 3-bet dry flops, they are going to go ahead and 3-bet dry flops when they have a strong hand**. Furthermore, players will be more than happy to 3-bet with overpairs to the board in this spot.

When the Yeti theorem first came about, the chances are that it worked pretty well for many people, but as time went by the game has developed and evolved, and so the Yeti theorem is no longer as useful as it once was.

Yeti theorem overview.

Now, I hope that you're not too annoyed at the fact that you just read through an article on what appears to be an outdated and useless play, because there is still something to be learned from this theorem. In some instances the Yeti theorem will still work, but my advice would be to not stick to the Yeti theorem as a rule of thumb, and use your own logic and thought processes when those 3-bets come around.

Hopefully this theorem has opened your eyes a little and helped you to think about 3-betting situations, which is really the most valuable aspect of this article. So whilst it may not have directly helped you by adding a new weapon to your arsenal, it will have helped your general understanding of the game.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](https://www.psychology.com/strategy/).

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By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

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This is another specific theorem like the [Baluga Whale theorem \(../baluga/\)](#), and similarly it is not too difficult to grasp. The theorem was initially put forward for limit Texas Hold'em games, but it works perfectly well in the no limit [Texas Hold'em \(/\)](#) environment.

clarkmeister
theorem

The Clarkmeister theorem states that:

“*If you are heads up and first to act on the river, if the river card is the 4th card of a same suit you should bet*”.

I can't find a reliable source for this theorem, but I'm confident that it stems from the 2+2 forums from a few years ago.

Why is the Clarkmeister theorem effective?

The Clarkmeister theorem works well because of the following reasons:

- The 4 cards of the same suit are going to scare many players.
- Therefore this creates a great opportunity to bluff [on the river \(../hand-guide/river/\)](#).
- A strong bet will often force any player without a flush or even a weak flush to fold.

If you put yourself in the shoes of a player that is facing a strong bet after that 4-flush card hits on the river, you can already feel yourself leaning toward folding anything less than a flush, along with weak flushes. Therefore you can see that this is a prime opportunity for a bluff for the player that is first to act, as you are going to fold the vast majority of your hands in this spot.

How to use Clarkmeister's theorem in Texas Hold'em.

To ensure that you get the most from the Clarkmeister theorem, make sure that you get the fundamentals sorted before attempting the bluff.

- You should be first to act on the river.
- You should be heads up against your opponent.
- You should make a strong bet – around $\frac{3}{4}$ the size of the pot at least.

If you are not first to act, it makes your bet a lot less convincing and so the bluff will be less effective. If your opponent checks to you and you bet, it makes it more obvious that you are trying to pull off a bluff ([../basic/bluffing/](http://pokerstrategy.com/basic/bluffing/)). Therefore as the Clarkmeister theorem states you should bet when you are first to act.

The more players there are in the hand, the more likely it is that someone actually has a great hand. If you are heads up there is a greatly reduced risk of your opponent actually having a strong flush or better.

By making a strong bet, it puts your opponent to a very tough decision, and increases the chances that they are going to fold. If you make a weak bet, then you are pretty much giving your opponent good odds to call, and so your bluff attempt is going to be pretty poor. Show no fear and make a decent bet if you really want the Clarkmeister theorem to work.

Important point.

When you are using the *Clarkmeister theorem*, you are turning your hand into a bluff. Therefore you should not look to bet out if you want to try and extract as much money from the hand as you can, because with the Clarkmeister theorem you are looking to get your opponent to fold.

Similarly, if you have a hand like a weak flush at this stage in the hand, you will be best served check/calling as opposed to betting out. This is because you will only be forcing weaker hands to fold, which doesn't provide you with any value. This would be referred to as a way ahead / way

behind ([../concepts/way-ahead-way-behind/](#)), situation, and so check/calling is better than bluffing.

Is the Clarkmeister theorem still effective?

Yes. It is not bullet proof like [Zeebo's theorem](#) ([../zeebo/](#)), but I think it is on par with the [Baluga theorem](#) ([../baluga/](#)), in terms of reliability.

Clarkmeister theorem overview.

Unlike the crazy [aejones theorem](#) ([../aejones/](#)) and outdated [Yeti theorem](#) ([../yeti/](#)), the Clarkmeister theorem is a useful one that you should take note of. Unless you are coming up against experienced players who are aware of this theorem and can exploit other players who use it, you should find the Clarkmeister theorem to be profitable over the long run.

This theorem should work brilliantly against the weaker players, which means that you will be able to steal your fair share of pots with it. Be sure to use your knowledge of your opponent and the information from previous betting rounds to help you when deciding whether or not to make this play, as this will help with its overall success rate.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy](#) ([/strategy/](#)).

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Zeebo's Theorem

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The hand starting at 41:45 in the [Jack Wilcox 4 \(/.../videos/wilcox/4/\)](/videos/wilcox/4/) strategy video is a perfect example of Zeebo's theorem.

Zeebo's theorem is quite a simple one, and is likely to be the most profitable of all the popular poker theorems. Zeebo's theorem states that:

“*No player is capable of folding a full house on any betting round, regardless of the size of the bet.*”

zeebo's
theorem

<http://captzeebo.supok.net/2006-02-12.html> -- (Update: it seems as though the source no longer exists.)

Nice and straightforward eh? Let's look into it in more detail...

Is Zeebo's theorem still effective?

Yes, and it's the most reliable theorem out of all the ones listed on this site. The theorem was put forward back in 2006, and has helped to make followers of this theorem a nice amount of money ever since.

Why Zeebo's theorem works.

Zeebo's theorem works because of the following points:

- A full-house is a very strong hand.
- Full houses do not come around regularly.
- Therefore players will very, very rarely fold a full house.

If you think about every possible situation of where you hold a full house in Texas Hold'em, you will not be able to find one where you can comfortably fold the hand. Even if the bet is very large, the chances are that you and other players will call the bet when you hold a full house.

In addition, even if your opponent holds a very weak full house, the fact that there is always the possibility that you could be bluffing means that they are going to force themselves to call anyway. They may not like making the call, but they are going to put that money in the middle when they have a full house.

You may not have thought about this idea too much before, but I'm sure that you can understand that this particular theorem holds a lot of truth at the Texas Hold'em tables.

How to use Zeebo's theorem to your advantage.

Now that you are aware of Zeebo's theorem, you need to do two things to start making money from the use of this particular theorem.

- Do not try and bluff anyone that you suspect holds a full house.
- Get as much money into the pot if you think your opponent has a full house and you hold a better hand.

Pretty straightforward right? If your opponent is never going to let go of their full house regardless of how much money you put in the pot, you should get all your money in the middle when you have the best of it and never bluff ([../basic/bluffing/](#)) if you are behind.

If you can remember these two simple rules the next time you are confident that your opponent has a full house, you will be able to save and win yourself a nice sum of money.

Zeebo's theorem example.

Just a simple example for this one. But it should highlight how useful the theorem is pretty well.

Your Hand: A♥ J♠

Board: A♠ A♦ Q♥ Q♣

Opponent's Hand: Let's say that we have good reason to suspect that they have a Q.

On this board, you should be looking to get as much money into the pot as possible. There should be no slowplaying here if you think that your opponent has a Q, because they will have a full house also and there is no getting away from the hand for them.

Even though they have the worst full house, they will almost always convince themselves to call in case you might be bluffing. As much as they dislike it, they are going to call. If you put yourself in your opponent's position, I'm sure that you can empathize and understand how you can exploit Zeebo's theorem fully.

Zeebo's theorem example hand history.

An exception.

Although Zeebo's theorem is good 99% of the time, there's always that 1% of the time where a tight player folds a full house. Here's a prime example of that 1% in a HSP() hand between Johnny Chan and Phil Laak.



I think Phil Laak's fold here is warranted. Chan is a very tight player and it's very unlikely that he's raising with anything that's beaten by 77. Of course, that's easy for me to say as I know each player's holecards. The suspiciously impressive part though is Laak's insta-fold – even the very best players would want to take a moment to think about it.

Nonetheless, these instances are rare, **and even when a situation like this pops up the majority of players will call anyway**. Even though Laak's fold looks like the right play, calling is far from horrific, and that's what most players will think as well (if they're good enough to think on that kind of [level](http://level(..../psychology/multiple-level-thinking/))).

Who is Zeebo?

Zeebo, "captZEEbo" or to use his full online alias "Captain Zeebo" ~~is~~ was a professional high stakes online poker player. Captain Zeebo's real name is Greg Lavery.

I don't know much about the man, but here is [Zeebo's blog](http://blogs.cardrunners.com/captZEEbo) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20091029090849/http://blogs.cardrunners.com/captZEEbo>). (looks like it has been dead for a while)

And here's a really interesting [documentary on Captain Zeebo's life as a professional poker player](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CK8OaYVjhTA) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CK8OaYVjhTA>). by [Deuces Cracked](http://training/sites/deuces-cracked/) ([/training/sites/deuces-cracked/](http://training/sites/deuces-cracked/)).

If you want to find out even more about captZEEbo, you can also check [captZEEbo's 2+2 member profile](https://forumserver.twoplustwo.com/members/15434/) (<https://forumserver.twoplustwo.com/members/15434/>) and search through all of his old posts and threads.

Zeebo's theorem overview.

If there is one poker theorem that you should learn and use at the tables, it should definitely be Zeebo's theorem. It is pretty straightforward, and it will help to win more money. Simple as that.

There is not much else I can really add to that, except for that you should try and make a conscious decision to think about when your opponent may have a full house. Otherwise the opportunity to take advantage of Zeebo's theorem will just pass you by. Don't let this be an article that you read and forget 10 minutes later. Hit the tables and think about the theorem – it will get drilled into you this way.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy](http://strategy/) ([/strategy/](http://strategy/)).

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? **Anonymous**

0 points · 12 years ago

Hey, just thought I should point out to you that the youtube video is no longer available.

G **Greg**

0 points · 10 years ago

Fixed it. Thanks.

That was some delay on my part. Sorry.

B **Bazil**

0 points · 11 years ago

Available here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2mt-ig_8T9M.

Worth watching for how cool Phil Laak is.

? **Anonymous**

0 points · 12 years ago

I think there is one very obvious flaw in this theory that hasn't been mentioned and might mislead some of the more amateur players is that fact that there is a case where you should fold a full house. A double paired board where two "obvious" full houses are essentially on the board (e.g. TTKKA) is a case where folding the the bottom full house (e.g. TX) to the board is more often then not the profitable move, especially if the single card (e.g. A) is higher than the double paired values (T or K) making the set/full house a possibility.

I think in this situation having the T (and a full house) is really not that great and folding to bets is generally the right play. The player is generally only going to betting hard if they have the 4 of a kind or the 1st/2nd full house, e.g. AA, KK or KX,

L

larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

I agree. The dubble paired board is a very obvious situation, and I don't believe any just slightly intelligent player will judge it much different from holding 2. pair on a dry board. I think the theorem apply only to situations, where the better full house is hidden, like a set over set situation on a paired board.

M

Mickey Brenneman

0 points · 8 years ago

My first time at the casino two weeks ago, I held 44, the board was 8 8 8 2 Q, my opponent had K 8... Walked away from the table after that hand with 7\$ left from my 300\$ buy in. this theorem is definitely reliable haha

?

Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

I have folded Full House before -

But this came down to knowledge of the player. I was at the table for a while and this guy would raise 2BB for a picture or A -

I am holding TT Call to the BB

This guy raises. I call and one other player calls

Flop comes out; K - T - K - I Just Flopped a monster of a full house

Not wanting to scare anyone off, I wait....and Bet Minimum to see the interest.

Aggressive player Raises to about Half of My stack.

Third Player Calls. I Fold.

I knew given the raise at the start, he was holding at least 1 high card. Given the very aggressive bet, I had a good reason to figure it was a King.

Otherplayer calls an all in bet on the turn and gets wiped. - Aggressive player had KT Flopped an even bigger full house.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

Yes I think Baluga Theorem is more reliable than Zeebo's. Folding fullhouse in double paired boards is easy. If you limit the case to non double-paired boards it might be very true.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 3 years ago

I folded a full house to a river shove in an MPN live MTT. It was the lower house and the river card smacked the Villain's range. Hence the fold.

J **Jivan Scarano**
0 points · 7 years ago

The most recent time I can remember folding a full house, the board was JJ9-8-J. I was holding an 8, and folded the river facing a big bet, a call in front of me, and another player to act behind. Bottom pair with trips on the board is not a very strong have at all.

On the other hand, last time I had quads, I had Q4 on QQQ-3-5. I was in position, and the other player bet into me on every street with 99, and called when I raised the river. Her reasoning was there was no card I could have hit to make a better full house (the 3 and 5 are both lower than her nines). I could quite easily have had TT+, or indeed, quads like I had, but she just couldn't fold a full house. I would have dumped nines on that board given the action.

I've folded AA on a 666 board, because the guy was acting so strong, there was just no way he didn't have it, and he did.

**#MAGA**
0 points · 3 years ago

All ok until the last one... you can't ever fold AA on a full board. He could have any lower pair and you're only beaten by the case 6

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The Baluga Theorem

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

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This is another theorem from the 2006 period. A poster at the 2+2 forum named “BalugaWhale” put forward this handy theorem that should help with a common yet tricky situation [on the turn \(/../hand-guide/turn/\)](/hand-guide/turn/).

The Baluga theorem requires a little more explanation (see the example below) than most poker theorems as it is a little more detailed, but it should be too hard to grasp. In a nutshell though, the Baluga theorem states that:



“*You should strongly re-evaluate the strength of one-pair hands in the face of a raise on the turn.*”

— [BalugaWhale](#)

<http://archives1.twoplustwo.com/showflat.php?Cat=0&Board=ssplnlpoker&Number=6605819&f>

Here is an example of where the Baluga Whale theorem commonly comes into play to help explain what this theorem means.

Baluga theorem example.

Your Hand: A♠ K♦

You are one of the first to act before the flop ([../hand-guide/preflop/](#)), and with your hand you decide to make a 4BB raise. There is just one caller in late position and you both go to the flop.

The Flop: A♥ 9♣ 3♦

This is pretty much an ideal flop, so you bet 8BBs, which is around the size of the pot.

The Turn: A♥ 9♣ 3♦ 7♣

The 7♣ is pretty much a harmless card, but it does bring along the flush and straight draw possibility, so a strong $\frac{3}{4}$ pot size bet is in order here to give any drawing hands the wrong odds to call. However, **our opponent raises this bet** and the action is back on us.

This has turned the hand on it's head and we are left in a tricky situation. Throughout the hand we never really considered the fact that our opponent has us beat, as it has been all about getting the most from our top pair.

According to the BalugaWhale theorem, we should strongly reconsider the strength of our pair due to this turn raise, and we should be looking to fold the majority of the time in this spot.

Baluga theorem example hand history.

Why is the Baluga theorem effective?

It is easy to see why the Baluga theorem is effective by asking yourself the following question:

| Would our opponent be raising this turn with anything less than top pair?

The simple answer is no. Any turn raise is going to show a significant amount of strength, and a weak top pair or worse is not going to warrant this sort of display of strength. I'm sure that you can feel how much of an awkward situation this is when you hold top pair top kicker, but we both know that folding is going to be the best move here the majority of the time.

One of the biggest problems is that we are out of position ([../basic/position/](#)), which means the information we have on our opponent is limited. You can try and convince yourself that the turn card was harmless and how might you like to think that your opponent is aggressively playing a draw, but at the end of it all you can't get away from the fact that you are in an uncomfortable situation where calling is likely to be a losing play over the long run.

If you decide to call on the turn, what are you going to do [on the river \(/../hand-guide/river/\)](#)? Your opponent is almost definitely going to be betting out as a bluff or betting with the best hand, so closing your eyes and calling the turn bet whilst hoping for the best on the river isn't going to be a great strategy.

Is the Baluga theorem still effective today?

Yes. I would say that the Baluga theorem is one of a small number of theorems that you should take note of and incorporate into your Texas Hold'em game.

Who is BalugaWhale?

Andrew "BalugaWhale" Seidman is a pretty well known name around the 2+2 forums. Andrew is a professional high stakes poker player and used to coach at the old "Deuces Cracked" training site. He was an awesome coach there.

You can read old posts and threads started by Andrew through his [BalugaWhale 2+2 forum member page \(https://forumserver.twoplustwo.com/members/47325/\)](#). He also used to have a blog called [balugabay.com \(https://web.archive.org/web/20160410043851/http://www.balugabay.com/\)](#). (no longer online).

For what it's worth, yes, "Baluga" is a misspelling of "Beluga". Not sure if this misspelling was actually intentional, but that's the way it stands.

Baluga Whale theorem overview.

In my opinion, the Baluga whale theorem is one of the top three theorems (along with [Zeebo's theorem \(/../zeebo/\)](#) and [Clarkmeisters' theorem \(/../clarkmeister/\)](#)) to come out of forums over the last few years.

I'm sure that you have been in this exact same situation many times before at the tables and had trouble making the best decision. At least now this theorem can lay your worries to rest as you make those folds with far less concern about whether or not you made the right play.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](#).

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M **Marlim**
0 points · 8 years ago

Yeah, until people start raise bluffing like crazy on the turn to make TPTK fold.

M **Mickey Brenneman**
0 points · 8 years ago

I'm a novice and all but in that situation I would tighten up and wait for a monster hand to take all his money, or let another player take all his money and then take it from them (assuming they don't leave) calling massive bluffs with top pair top kicker just isn't profitable even if you're almost sure its a bluff they have a better chance of improving if they have any kind of draw.

U **ultimatecurse**
0 points · 7 years ago

it is these days to hold on with top pair is profitable in general unless its a super nit. Maybe in early 2000s it wasnt but now players are much more aggressive as they know people fold due to this theorem so a lot more bluffing then there used to be. YOu just have to hold and and stick with your ev calculations and in a vacuum math will always win and you will show a profit. If you fold then your going to get exploited by good players. Its not easy to get top pair in texas holdem. Basically cause of this theorem players have had to turn into calling stations cause everyone knows about this and now players are bluff raising the turn with draws and any blockers. If you wait for a monster you will bleed all your money away cause only 2% of the time do you actually hit a monster hand so the other 98% of the time your folding meaning your losing at poker.

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Zeebo's theorem works because of the following points:

- A full-house is a very strong hand.
- Full houses do not come around regularly.
- Therefore players will very, very rarely fold a full house.

If you think about every possible situation of where you hold a full house in Texas Hold'em, you will not be able to find one where you can comfortably fold the hand. Even if the bet is very large, the chances are that you and other players will call the bet when you hold a full house.

In addition, even if your opponent holds a very weak full house, the fact that there is always the possibility that you could be bluffing means that they are going to force themselves to call anyway. They may not like making the call, but they are going to put that money in the middle when they have a full house.

You may not have thought about this idea too much before, but I'm sure that you can understand that this particular theorem holds a lot of truth at the Texas Hold'em tables.

How to use Zeebo's theorem to your advantage.

Now that you are aware of Zeebo's theorem, you need to do two things to start making money from the use of this particular theorem.

- Do not try and bluff anyone that you suspect holds a full house.
- Get as much money into the pot if you think your opponent has a full house and you hold a better hand.

Pretty straightforward right? If your opponent is never going to let go of their full house regardless of how much money you put in the pot, you should get all your money in the middle when you have the best of it and never bluff ([../basic/bluffing/](#)) if you are behind.

If you can remember these two simple rules the next time you are confident that your opponent has a full house, you will be able to save and win yourself a nice sum of money.

Zeebo's theorem example.

Just a simple example for this one. But it should highlight how useful the theorem is pretty well.

Your Hand: A♥ J♠

Board: A♠ A♦ Q♥ Q♣

Opponent's Hand: Let's say that we have good reason to suspect that they have a Q.

On this board, you should be looking to get as much money into the pot as possible. There should be no slowplaying here if you think that your opponent has a Q, because they will have a full house also and there is no getting away from the hand for them.

Even though they have the worst full house, they will almost always convince themselves to call in case you might be bluffing. As much as they dislike it, they are going to call. If you put yourself in your opponent's position, I'm sure that you can empathize and understand how you can exploit Zeebo's theorem fully.

Zeebo's theorem example hand history.

An exception.

Although Zeebo's theorem is good 99% of the time, there's always that 1% of the time where a tight player folds a full house. Here's a prime example of that 1% in a HSP() hand between Johnny Chan and Phil Laak.



I think Phil Laak's fold here is warranted. Chan is a very tight player and it's very unlikely that he's raising with anything that's beaten by 77. Of course, that's easy for me to say as I know each player's holecards. The suspiciously impressive part though is Laak's insta-fold – even the very best players would want to take a moment to think about it.

Nonetheless, these instances are rare, **and even when a situation like this pops up the majority of players will call anyway**. Even though Laak's fold looks like the right play, calling is far from horrific, and that's what most players will think as well (if they're good enough to think on that kind of [level \(../psychology/multiple-level-thinking/\)](http://level(..../psychology/multiple-level-thinking/))).

Who is Zeebo?

Zeebo, "captZEEbo" or to use his full online alias "Captain Zeebo" ~~is~~ was a professional high stakes online poker player. Captain Zeebo's real name is Greg Lavery.

I don't know much about the man, but here is [Zeebo's blog](http://blogs.cardrunners.com/captZEEbo) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20091029090849/http://blogs.cardrunners.com/captZEEbo>). (looks like it has been dead for a while)

And here's a really interesting [documentary on Captain Zeebo's life as a professional poker player](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CK8OaYVjhTA) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CK8OaYVjhTA>). by [Deuces Cracked \(/training/sites/deuces-cracked/\)](http://training/sites/deuces-cracked/).

If you want to find out even more about captZEEbo, you can also check [captZEEbo's 2+2 member profile](https://forumserver.twoplustwo.com/members/15434/) (<https://forumserver.twoplustwo.com/members/15434/>) and search through all of his old posts and threads.

Zeebo's theorem overview.

If there is one poker theorem that you should learn and use at the tables, it should definitely be Zeebo's theorem. It is pretty straightforward, and it will help to win more money. Simple as that.

There is not much else I can really add to that, except for that you should try and make a conscious decision to think about when your opponent may have a full house. Otherwise the opportunity to take advantage of Zeebo's theorem will just pass you by. Don't let this be an article that you read and forget 10 minutes later. Hit the tables and think about the theorem – it will get drilled into you this way.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](http://strategy/).

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? **Anonymous**

0 points · 12 years ago

Hey, just thought I should point out to you that the youtube video is no longer available.

B **Bazil**

0 points · 11 years ago

Available here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2mt-ig_8T9M.

Worth watching for how cool Phil Laak is.

G **Greg**

0 points · 10 years ago

Fixed it. Thanks.

That was some delay on my part. Sorry.

? **Anonymous**

0 points · 3 years ago

I folded a full house to a river shove in an MPN live MTT. It was the lower house and the river card smacked the Villain's range. Hence the fold.

? **Anonymous**

0 points · 12 years ago

I think there is one very obvious flaw in this theory that hasn't been mentioned and might mislead some of the more amateur players is that fact that there is a case where you should fold a full house. A double paired board where two "obvious" full houses are essentially on the board (e.g. TTKKA) is a case where folding the the bottom full house (e.g. TX) to the board is more often then not the profitable move, especially if the single card (e.g. A) is higher than the double paired values (T or K) making the set/full house a possibility.

I think in this situation having the T (and a full house) is really not that great and folding to bets is generally the right play. The player is generally only going to betting hard if they have the 4 of a kind or the 1st/2nd full house, e.g. AA, KK or KX,

L

larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

I agree. The dubble paired board is a very obvious situation, and I don't believe any just slightly intelligent player will judge it much different from holding 2. pair on a dry board. I think the teorem apply only to situations, where the better full house is hidden, like a set over set situation on a paired board.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

Yes I think Baluga Theorem is more reliable than Zeebo's. Folding fullhouse in double paired boards is easy. If you limit the case to non double-paired boards it might be very true.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

I have folded Full House before -

But this came down to knowledge of the player. I was at the table for a while and this guy would raise 2BB for a picture or A -

I am holding TT Call to the BB

This guy raises. I call and one other player calls

Flop comes out; K - T - K - I Just Flopped a monster of a full house

Not wanting to scare anyone off, I wait....and Bet Minimum to see the interest.

Aggressive player Raises to about Half of My stack.

Third Player Calls. I Fold.

I knew given the raise at the start, he was holding at least 1 high card. Given the very aggressive bet, I had a good reason to figure it was a King.

Otherplayer calls an all in bet on the turn and gets wiped. - Aggressive player had KT Flopped an even bigger full house.

M

Mickey Brenneman

0 points · 8 years ago

My first time at the casino two weeks ago, I held 44, the board was 8 8 8 2 Q, my opponent had K 8... Walked away from the table after that hand with 7\$ left from my 300\$ buy in. this theorem is definitely reliable haha

J **Jivan Scarano**
0 points · 7 years ago

The most recent time I can remember folding a full house, the board was JJ9-8-J. I was holding an 8, and folded the river facing a big bet, a call in front of me, and another player to act behind. Bottom pair with trips on the board is not a very strong have at all.

On the other hand, last time I had quads, I had Q4 on QQQ-3-5. I was in position, and the other player bet into me on every street with 99, and called when I raised the river. Her reasoning was there was no card I could have hit to make a better full house (the 3 and 5 are both lower than her nines). I could quite easily have had TT+, or indeed, quads like I had, but she just couldn't fold a full house. I would have dumped nines on that board given the action.

I've folded AA on a 666 board, because the guy was acting so strong, there was just no way he didn't have it, and he did.

**#MAGA**
0 points · 3 years ago

All ok until the last one... you can't ever fold AA on a full board. He could have any lower pair and you're only beaten by the case 6

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The Yeti Theorem

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

[Poker Theorems \(/strategy/theorems/\)](/strategy/theorems/): [aejones \(/strategy/theorems/aejones/\)](/strategy/theorems/aejones/) | [Baluga \(/strategy/theorems/baluga/\)](/strategy/theorems/baluga/) | [Clarkmeister \(/strategy/theorems/clarkmeister/\)](/strategy/theorems/clarkmeister/) | [Fundamental \(/strategy/theorems/fundamental/\)](/strategy/theorems/fundamental/) | [Yeti](#) | [Zeebo \(/strategy/theorems/zeebo/\)](/strategy/theorems/zeebo/)

The "Yeti theorem" is quite an old theorem in poker that was coined by a poster at the 2+2 forums some time ago. The theorem essentially states that:

“A 3-bet on a dry flop (preferably paired) is almost always a bluff.”



[Yeti Theorem, twoplustwo.com forums \(http://archives1.twoplustwo.com/showflat.php?Number=9285815\)](http://archives1.twoplustwo.com/showflat.php?Number=9285815). -- Not the original thread, but good enough.

This means that if the flop could not give anyone a possible flush or straight draw, if you re-raise an opponent and they raise you back, the chances are that they are bluffing.

Yeti theorem example.

Let's say that you are heads up against an opponent and you are first to act. The flop has come 8♦ 3♠ 3♣. It does not really matter what cards you are holding or what happened before the flop, so just take it as it is.

We check to our opponent and they bet out – perfectly standard. We then [check-raise \(/..../plays/check-raise/\)](/plays/check-raise/) them and the action is back on our opponent, as they have to call our raise to see the next card. If our opponent once again raises this raise, then by using the Yeti theorem why can assume that they are almost always bluffing in this situation, and so we should be able to push all in and make them fold or call and show down the best hand.

How the Yeti theorem works.

So now we know the structure of the *Yeti theorem*, let's have a think about the ideas behind the Yeti theorem. We'll assume that the flop is still 8♦ 3♠ 3♣.

There are 2 key ideas that drive the Yeti theorem.

1. If our opponent had an 8, they would not have a strong enough hand to re-raise our check raise.
2. If our opponent had a 3, they would be more likely to trap and call as opposed to raising us again.

Take a few seconds to mull over these 2 ideas – it's easy to read over them but not fully take everything in, so make sure you have an idea of why these points make sense.

Our opponent has an 8.

If our opponent has an 8, their bet after we have checked to them makes perfect sense. They may well have the best hand and they will want to take the pot without giving us the opportunity to catch up if we missed. Now, if we check-raise it shows a great amount of strength, and it would easily appear as though we have a 3 or an over pair at least.

No Texas Hold'em (/) player with any common sense is going to be confident enough to call this check-raise with just an 8, let alone make another raise, which means that a 3-bet here would be totally out of place.

Our opponent has a 3.

If our opponent has a 3, the chances are that they will be more inclined to slowplay the hand as opposed to come out raising and re-raising on the flop. The flop bet is not a bad play, but a number of players are likely to check here in an attempt to trap their opponent due to the flop being so dry.

The most peculiar play according to the Yeti theorem would be the fact that they 3-bet with their 3-of-a-kind, because this would seem like too strong of a play, where calling and trapping would be the preferable option for the vast majority of players.

Is the Yeti theorem still effective?

In my honest opinion, the Yeti theorem is old and does not hold as much weight as it used to. So no, I wouldn't say that it is effective anymore.

There are two main problems with the Yeti theorem in Texas Hold'em:

- Players are far more aggressive these days, and 3-bets with strong hands are not entirely rare.
- Players are likely to 3-bet dry flops like 8♦ 3♠ 3♣ with overpairs.

The fact of the matter is that players are always looking to out-level their opponent (see [multiple level thinking \(../psychology/multiple-level-thinking/\)](https://www.psychology.com/multiple-level-thinking/)). Therefore **if your opponent knows that you think that your opponent is always bluffing when they 3-bet dry flops, they are going to go ahead and 3-bet dry flops when they have a strong hand**. Furthermore, players will be more than happy to 3-bet with overpairs to the board in this spot.

When the Yeti theorem first came about, the chances are that it worked pretty well for many people, but as time went by the game has developed and evolved, and so the Yeti theorem is no longer as useful as it once was.

Yeti theorem overview.

Now, I hope that you're not too annoyed at the fact that you just read through an article on what appears to be an outdated and useless play, because there is still something to be learned from this theorem. In some instances the Yeti theorem will still work, but my advice would be to not stick to the Yeti theorem as a rule of thumb, and use your own logic and thought processes when those 3-bets come around.

Hopefully this theorem has opened your eyes a little and helped you to think about 3-betting situations, which is really the most valuable aspect of this article. So whilst it may not have directly helped you by adding a new weapon to your arsenal, it will have helped your general understanding of the game.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](https://www.psychology.com/strategy/).

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? **Anonymous**
0 points · 10 years ago

Yeah, this is wrong. I 3-bet pots like this all the time with the nuts. People make mistakes on these pots because everyone thinks your bluffing. So I play it really fast and people usually fall for it even with A high. Example 1/2 live... I have A8s raise \$8 from middle position, one caller from big blind, flop Q88. BB checks, I bet 16, BB raises to 45, I shove, BB calls with Q3.

Neither of us was bluffing. I was inducing. He though I had JJ or bluffs in my range. I have no 3-bet bluffs in my range on these boards. But these boards are the most profitable to play fast because you get floated by almost any A high and raised by any pair.

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The Clarkmeister Theorem

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

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This is another specific theorem like the [Baluga Whale theorem \(../baluga/\)](#), and similarly it is not too difficult to grasp. The theorem was initially put forward for limit Texas Hold'em games, but it works perfectly well in the no limit [Texas Hold'em \(/\)](#) environment.

clarkmeister
theorem

The Clarkmeister theorem states that:

“*If you are heads up and first to act on the river, if the river card is the 4th card of a same suit you should bet*”.

I can't find a reliable source for this theorem, but I'm confident that it stems from the 2+2 forums from a few years ago.

Why is the Clarkmeister theorem effective?

The Clarkmeister theorem works well because of the following reasons:

- The 4 cards of the same suit are going to scare many players.
- Therefore this creates a great opportunity to bluff [on the river \(../hand-guide/river/\)](#).
- A strong bet will often force any player without a flush or even a weak flush to fold.

If you put yourself in the shoes of a player that is facing a strong bet after that 4-flush card hits on the river, you can already feel yourself leaning toward folding anything less than a flush, along with weak flushes. Therefore you can see that this is a prime opportunity for a bluff for the player that is first to act, as you are going to fold the vast majority of your hands in this spot.

How to use Clarkmeister's theorem in Texas Hold'em.

To ensure that you get the most from the Clarkmeister theorem, make sure that you get the fundamentals sorted before attempting the bluff.

- You should be first to act on the river.
- You should be heads up against your opponent.
- You should make a strong bet – around $\frac{3}{4}$ the size of the pot at least.

If you are not first to act, it makes your bet a lot less convincing and so the bluff will be less effective. If your opponent checks to you and you bet, it makes it more obvious that you are trying to pull off a bluff ([../basic/bluffing/](https://pokercoaching.com/basic/bluffing/)). Therefore as the Clarkmeister theorem states you should bet when you are first to act.

The more players there are in the hand, the more likely it is that someone actually has a great hand. If you are heads up there is a greatly reduced risk of your opponent actually having a strong flush or better.

By making a strong bet, it puts your opponent to a very tough decision, and increases the chances that they are going to fold. If you make a weak bet, then you are pretty much giving your opponent good odds to call, and so your bluff attempt is going to be pretty poor. Show no fear and make a decent bet if you really want the Clarkmeister theorem to work.

Important point.

When you are using the *Clarkmeister theorem*, you are turning your hand into a bluff. Therefore you should not look to bet out if you want to try and extract as much money from the hand as you can, because with the Clarkmeister theorem you are looking to get your opponent to fold.

Similarly, if you have a hand like a weak flush at this stage in the hand, you will be best served check/calling as opposed to betting out. This is because you will only be forcing weaker hands to fold, which doesn't provide you with any value. This would be referred to as a way ahead / way

behind ([../concepts/way-ahead-way-behind/](#)), situation, and so check/calling is better than bluffing.

Is the Clarkmeister theorem still effective?

Yes. It is not bullet proof like [Zeebo's theorem](#) ([../zeebo/](#)), but I think it is on par with the [Baluga theorem](#) ([../baluga/](#)), in terms of reliability.

Clarkmeister theorem overview.

Unlike the crazy [aejones theorem](#) ([../aejones/](#)) and outdated [Yeti theorem](#) ([../yeti/](#)), the Clarkmeister theorem is a useful one that you should take note of. Unless you are coming up against experienced players who are aware of this theorem and can exploit other players who use it, you should find the Clarkmeister theorem to be profitable over the long run.

This theorem should work brilliantly against the weaker players, which means that you will be able to steal your fair share of pots with it. Be sure to use your knowledge of your opponent and the information from previous betting rounds to help you when deciding whether or not to make this play, as this will help with its overall success rate.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy](#) ([/strategy/](#)).

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The Baluga Theorem

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

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This is another theorem from the 2006 period. A poster at the 2+2 forum named “BalugaWhale” put forward this handy theorem that should help with a common yet tricky situation [on the turn \(/../hand-guide/turn/\)](/hand-guide/turn/).

The Baluga theorem requires a little more explanation (see the example below) than most poker theorems as it is a little more detailed, but it should be too hard to grasp. In a nutshell though, the Baluga theorem states that:



“*You should strongly re-evaluate the strength of one-pair hands in the face of a raise on the turn.*”

— [BalugaWhale](#)

<http://archives1.twoplustwo.com/showflat.php?Cat=0&Board=ssplnlpoker&Number=6605819&f>

Here is an example of where the Baluga Whale theorem commonly comes into play to help explain what this theorem means.

Baluga theorem example.

Your Hand: A♠ K♦

You are one of the first to act before the flop ([../hand-guide/preflop/](#)), and with your hand you decide to make a 4BB raise. There is just one caller in late position and you both go to the flop.

The Flop: A♥ 9♣ 3♦

This is pretty much an ideal flop, so you bet 8BBs, which is around the size of the pot.

The Turn: A♥ 9♣ 3♦ 7♣

The 7♣ is pretty much a harmless card, but it does bring along the flush and straight draw possibility, so a strong $\frac{3}{4}$ pot size bet is in order here to give any drawing hands the wrong odds to call. However, **our opponent raises this bet** and the action is back on us.

This has turned the hand on it's head and we are left in a tricky situation. Throughout the hand we never really considered the fact that our opponent has us beat, as it has been all about getting the most from our top pair.

According to the BalugaWhale theorem, we should strongly reconsider the strength of our pair due to this turn raise, and we should be looking to fold the majority of the time in this spot.

Baluga theorem example hand history.

Why is the Baluga theorem effective?

It is easy to see why the Baluga theorem is effective by asking yourself the following question:

| Would our opponent be raising this turn with anything less than top pair?

The simple answer is no. Any turn raise is going to show a significant amount of strength, and a weak top pair or worse is not going to warrant this sort of display of strength. I'm sure that you can feel how much of an awkward situation this is when you hold top pair top kicker, but we both know that folding is going to be the best move here the majority of the time.

One of the biggest problems is that we are out of position ([../basic/position/](#)), which means the information we have on our opponent is limited. You can try and convince yourself that the turn card was harmless and how might you like to think that your opponent is aggressively playing a draw, but at the end of it all you can't get away from the fact that you are in an uncomfortable situation where calling is likely to be a losing play over the long run.

If you decide to call on the turn, what are you going to do [on the river](#) ([../hand-guide/river/](#))? Your opponent is almost definitely going to be betting out as a bluff or betting with the best hand, so closing your eyes and calling the turn bet whilst hoping for the best on the river isn't going to be a great strategy.

Is the Baluga theorem still effective today?

Yes. I would say that the Baluga theorem is one of a small number of theorems that you should take note of and incorporate into your Texas Hold'em game.

Who is BalugaWhale?

Andrew "BalugaWhale" Seidman is a pretty well known name around the 2+2 forums. Andrew is a professional high stakes poker player and used to coach at the old "Deuces Cracked" training site. He was an awesome coach there.

You can read old posts and threads started by Andrew through his [BalugaWhale 2+2 forum member page](#) (<https://forumserver.twoplustwo.com/members/47325/>). He also used to have a blog called [balugabay.com](#) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20160410043851/http://www.balugabay.com/>), (no longer online).

For what it's worth, yes, "Baluga" is a misspelling of "Beluga". Not sure if this misspelling was actually intentional, but that's the way it stands.

Baluga Whale theorem overview.

In my opinion, the Baluga whale theorem is one of the top three theorems (along with [Zeebo's theorem](#) ([../zeebo/](#)), and [Clarkmeisters' theorem](#) ([../clarkmeister/](#))) to come out of forums over the last few years.

I'm sure that you have been in this exact same situation many times before at the tables and had trouble making the best decision. At least now this theorem can lay your worries to rest as you make those folds with far less concern about whether or not you made the right play.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy](#) ([/strategy/](#)).

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M **Marlim**
0 points · 8 years ago

Yeah, until people start raise bluffing like crazy on the turn to make TPTK fold.

M **Mickey Brenneman**
0 points · 8 years ago

I'm a novice and all but in that situation I would tighten up and wait for a monster hand to take all his money, or let another player take all his money and then take it from them (assuming they don't leave) calling massive bluffs with top pair top kicker just isn't profitable even if you're almost sure its a bluff they have a better chance of improving if they have any kind of draw.

U **ultimatecurse**
0 points · 7 years ago

it is these days to hold on with top pair is profitable in general unless its a super nit. Maybe in early 2000s it wasnt but now players are much more aggressive as they know people fold due to this theorem so a lot more bluffing then there used to be. YOu just have to hold and and stick with your ev calculations and in a vacuum math will always win and you will show a profit. If you fold then your going to get exploited by good players. Its not easy to get top pair in texas holdem. Basically cause of this theorem players have had to turn into calling stations cause everyone knows about this and now players are bluff raising the turn with draws and any blockers. If you wait for a monster you will bleed all your money away cause only 2% of the time do you actually hit a monster hand so the other 98% of the time your folding meaning your losing at poker.

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aeJones Theorem

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#)

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As with the majority of theorems, the aeJones theorem was name after a poster at the 2+2 forums named "aeJones" - surprise surprise. This theorem is actually pretty tongue-in-cheek, but I'm going to discuss it anyway.

The aeJones theorem states that:

“*No one ever has anything.*”

aeJones
theorem

[aeJones, twoplustwo.com forums \(http://archives1.twoplustwo.com/showthreaded.php?Cat=0&Number=9997660&an=0&page=0\)](http://archives1.twoplustwo.com/showthreaded.php?Cat=0&Number=9997660&an=0&page=0)

Aaron "aeJones" Jones used to coaches at a training site called LeggoPoker.

A pretty broad and straightforward statement I know, but let's have a think about it anyway...

Is aeJones' theorem effective?

If you take it literally, no. The chances are that you didn't need me to tell you that, but it's good to make sure that everyone knows where they stand. If you use the aeJones theorem during play, you will lose money.

But still, that's not to say that we can't salvage something useful from this theorem.

The idea behind the aejones theorem.

The driving force behind the aejones theorem is the following:

- Players do not always have as strong a hand as you think they do.
- Betting, raising and general aggression ([../general/aggression/](#)), is often enough to make your opponent fold.

Whilst there is an element of truth in both of these points, if you go all out betting and raising as the theorem advocates, you are not going to be winning much money. Of course there will be times when you win pots due to your aggression forcing other players to fold, but this style of play is just going to land you in very unfortunate spots time and time again.

Taken literally, the aejones theorem suggests that wild raises and calls are the order of the day at the Texas Hold'em ([/](#)) poker tables, and we both know that isn't the case for any successful poker player.

What can you learn from the aejones theorem?

If you take this theorem with an industrial size grain of salt, you might be able to walk away from this article with a slightly improved outlook on the game. If you ignore the disorderliness of the basic theorem, I think that you can actually take two useful things from it:

- Your opponent is not always going to have the absolute nuts.
- Playing aggressive poker is much better than playing passively.

First of all, understanding that your opponents will not always have the absolute nuts when they are betting into you will serve you well when it comes to analyzing plays and making decisions. Because we never know the exact two cards our opponent holds, it's easy to fear the worst when facing a bet, when the fact of the matter is that our opponent may be just as scared of what we are holding.

The core of the aejones theorem is that players can often give too much credit for what their opponent is holding.

I am not suggesting that you should think that you can always force your opponents to fold with a reraise, but simply to remember that both players in a hand have concerns about what their opponent holds. If you can sensibly take advantage of this mutual caution during play, you might be able to pick up a few extra pots.

Secondly, as you should know, aggressive poker is winning poker. You don't win pots big pots and make opponents fold by playing passively, so always try and play poker with controlled aggression. Have a browse over the article on the [importance of aggression \(../general/aggression/\)](http://general/aggression/) in poker for more information on this topic.

Who is aejones?

Aaron "aejones" Jones was/is a very high stakes professional poker player. Aaron used to record training videos for [LeggoPoker.com \(https://leggopoker.com\)](https://leggopoker.com) (no longer running), which was a popular online poker training site.

If you're feeling a little stalker-ish and want to check up on aejones' past, you can read all of his previous posts and threads at the 2+2 forums through [aejones' 2+2 member account \(https://forumserver.twoplustwo.com/members/39072/\)](https://forumserver.twoplustwo.com/members/39072/) .

"aejones theorem" overview.

Despite the fact that the aejones is very tongue-in-cheek, it does actually bring up a few subtle but useful points if you look hard enough.

This article may or may not have changed your outlook on the game, but either way the aejones theorem is one that I thought was worth discussing to try and extract some good from it, in addition to clearing up any confusion with what the theorem implies.

At the end of the day though, just be sure to not take this theorem literally, and certainly do not use it the next time you sit down at the tables.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](http://strategy/).

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The Fundamental Theorem Of Poker

[Poker Theorems \(/strategy/theorems/\)](/strategy/theorems/): [aejones \(/strategy/theorems/aejones/\)](/strategy/theorems/aejones/) | [Baluga \(/strategy/theorems/baluga/\)](/strategy/theorems/baluga/) | [Clarkmeister \(/strategy/theorems/clarkmeister/\)](/strategy/theorems/clarkmeister/) | [Fundamental](#) | [Yeti \(/strategy/theorems/yeti/\)](/strategy/theorems/yeti/) | [Zeebo \(/strategy/theorems/zeebo/\)](/strategy/theorems/zeebo/)

The fundamental theory of poker was put forward by professional poker player David Sklansky in the popular poker strategy book [The Theory of Poker \(https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1880685000?ie=UTF8&tag=thpoba-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1880685000\)](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1880685000?ie=UTF8&tag=thpoba-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1880685000) .

fundamental
theorem of poker

Quoting the theory directly from the book, it states that:

“Every time you play a hand differently from the way you would have played it if you could see all your opponents' cards, they gain; and every time you play your hand the same way you would have played it if you could see all their cards, they lose.”

“*Conversely, every time opponents play their hands differently from the way they would have if they could see all your cards, you gain; and every time they play their hands the same way they would have played if they could see all your cards, you lose.*”

David Sklasnky, *The Theory of Poker* (<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1880685000?ie=UTF8&tag=thpoba-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1880685000>).

This particular poker theorem is different to the other ones described on this site, because it is a big general theorem as opposed to a smaller theorem that tells you what to do in X situation. Nonetheless, it is pretty straight forward, and it is a cornerstone of every winning poker player's game.

Is the theorem still effective?

No doubt about it; the fundamental theorem of poker always has been and always will be a concrete theorem in the world of poker. So there's no excuses for not learning this one.

Explanation of the fundamental theorem of poker.

Imagine that the next time you play Texas Hold'em (L), all of your opponents' holecards will be turned up so that you can see them. If this is the case, you would always know the strength of your opponents' hands, and therefore you would always know whether to bet, check, raise, call and fold every time the action gets to you. Therefore basically speaking:

- If you can see that you have the best hand, you would bet. (*Unless there is more value in deception*)
- If you can see that you have the worst hand, you would fold. (*Unless you have odds to draw*)

This means that you would be playing the most profitable game of poker possible, as you are following the fundamental theorem of poker perfectly.

Unfortunately however, the whole point of poker is that you are never 100% sure of what your opponent holds, which means that you are going to drift away from this perfect line of poker by not knowing the exact cards that each player has. So the key idea is to try and play poker as

perfectly as possible even without being able to see other players' cards.

In a nutshell, a winning poker player is a player that can play as closely to the way they would if they could see all of their opponents' cards. The more information that you can obtain from your opponent through [reads](#) ([../general/putting-players-on-hands/](#)) and by analyzing their betting patterns, the closer you will be able to play to this level and the more profitable your game will be.

Example of the fundamental theorem of poker.

A \$1/\$2 NL game and both players have \$200 stacks.

Our Hand: J♦ J♣

Opponent's Hand: 9♠ 8♥

Board: A♠ J♥ 2♣

Let's say that we are last to act, and our opponent has bet \$20 into a \$20 pot on the flop. We can also see what cards our opponent is holding. Now, according to the fundamental theorem of poker, what should we do? Well, we have 3 possible options.

1. Fold
2. Call
3. Raise

Folding is out of the question, because we can see that we have the best hand. So we're down to either calling or raising.

The best action here is to call. We can see that our opponent is making a pure bluff at this pot, so if we were to raise with by far the best hand here there is very little chance that our opponent is going to call and put more money in the pot. However, by calling we are giving our opponent the opportunity to put more money in on the turn by bluffing again. We stand to make more from the hand through deception, so calling has a greater [expected value](#) ([../mathematics/expected-value/](#)) than raising.

However, if we can see our opponent has a hand like A♥ 2♠ for two-pair, **raising** would definitely be far more +EV than just calling. We can be very confident that our opponent will call a raise, so we can get a lot more value from the hand by raising with our strong hand rather than attempting to induce a bluff like we did in the last example.

As you can see, knowing the exact 2 cards that our opponent is holding in each situation helps us to make the most profitable play possible.

What's the use of the fundamental theorem?

The most important idea is just to be aware of the theorem and try your best to follow it as closely as possible by analyzing your opponents' plays and reading them as best as you can.

The better your hand reading ([../general/putting-players-on-hands/](#)) skills get, the closer you will be able to play according to the fundamental theorem and the more money you will make.

You will not always be able to fill in all the gaps, but that is okay because neither will your opponents. But if you can build a greater understanding of the way they play and play more closely to the fundamental theorem of poker than they do, you will come out on top at the end of the day.

Overview of the fundamental theorem of poker.

I think I just about covered all of what I wanted to say about the theorem in this article. The fundamental theorem is not a small theorem that points out a small aspect of the game, it is a whole new way of thinking and a way to approach the game.

If you can play poker with the intention of playing as closely as you can to the way you would play if you could see all of your opponents' cards, you will do well. However, poker is poker because you are never fully aware of what the other player holds. All of the strategy articles on Texas Hold'em ([../strategy/](#)) and on any other poker variant basically tries to help you play as closely to the fundamental theorem of poker based on the limited information that you have on your opponents.

It's as simple as that!

Related articles.

- The Real Objective Of Poker ([/videos/wilcox/articles/the-real-objective-of-poker/](#))
([/videos/wilcox/articles/the-real-objective-of-poker/](#)).

([/videos/wilcox/articles/the-real-objective-of-poker/](#)).

Go back to the awesome ([/videos/wilcox/articles/the-real-objective-of-poker/](#)) Texas Hold'em Strategy ([/strategy/](#)).

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? **Anonymous**
0 points · 9 years ago

Dude, you're completely missing the point of the fundamental theorem of poker and have done new poker players a dishonor by posting this article.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 8 years ago

Care to offer a counterpoint for us "dishonored new players"? Or are you just here to poop all over everything?

K **Kelsey**
0 points · 9 years ago

How exactly did he miss the point?

[http://www.pokerstrategy.co... \(http://www.pokerstrategy.com/glossary/Fundamental-Theorem-of-Poker/\)](http://www.pokerstrategy.com/glossary/Fundamental-Theorem-of-Poker/)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wi... \(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fundamental theorem of poker\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fundamental_theorem_of_poker)

I'm fairly new to poker, so you might be right, but these articles seem to corroborate the ideas in this article.

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Poker Metagame

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

What is the metagame?

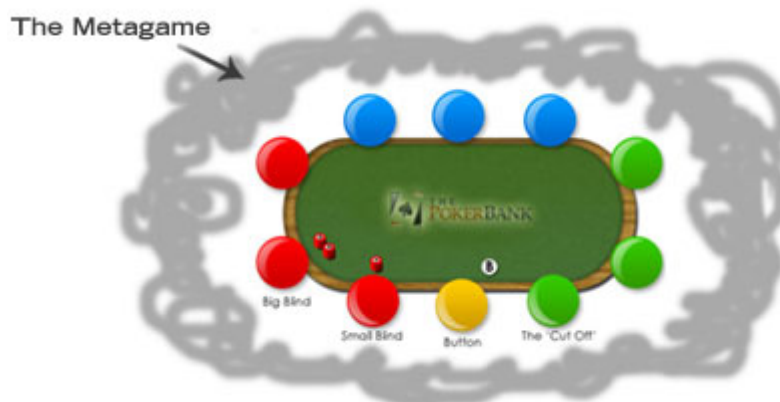


Metagame is often referred to as the “game within the game”, where you make a play or decision that has been influenced by external knowledge rather than based on [fundamental strategy \(/../theorems/fundamental/\)](#) alone. To put it another way, every time you make a play that goes against (or ignores) basic [mathematical strategy \(/../mathematics/\)](#) in poker, chances are that you are utilizing *meta game strategy*.

The poker metagame is the "game within the game", which focuses on information other than cards, chips and bet sizes.

The Poker meta game is not about the cards, the [size of the bets \(/../basic/bet-sizing/\)](#) or the [stack sizes \(/../concepts/stack-sizes/\)](#). The poker meta game is more of a “thinking man's poker”, where you consider the potential results of your actions and the general gameplay to help you make the most profitable decisions at the table.

Metagame diagram.



Awful diagram I know. But hopefully it helps to push the idea that the metagame is all the stuff that takes place in the minds of the players and away from the "physical" aspects of play.

This all sounds well and good, but I'm sure you are still a little confused, so allow me to elaborate with an example...

Poker metagame example.

Lets say that you have been playing at a table for a short period of time and you are playing a hand against an opponent who you know very little about. For whatever the reason, you are at the river with a mediocre hand facing a moderately sized bet. Either way, you are confident that over the long run, basic poker mathematics suggests that making the call would be an **unprofitable play**.

However, try and think beyond the basic mathematics of this situation and consider other outcomes of calling this bet for a second. Even though we may well be making a slightly poor mathematical play over the long run, there are two unique advantages of calling here:

- We get to see our opponent's cards.
- We give ourselves a loose [table image](#) ([../table-image/](#)).

Being able to see our opponent's cards in this hand may well prove to be very handy for us, as it allows us to see what type of player our opponent is. We can then use this information on them to make better decisions in future hands because we have a better knowledge of their style of play.

In addition to this, by making quite a weak play, we may well give the impression that we are a poor player that calls down river bets with marginal hands. This could prove to be beneficial in future hands as our opponent may decide to show less respect to our bets, allowing us to potentially take down bigger pots later on down the line.

So **even though we made a play that was unprofitable based purely on the mathematics of the situation, the repercussions of that particular play may well make up for this small loss through bigger wins in future hands**. This may well have been something that you have thought about before, and it is essentially what the poker meta game is all about.

An unprofitable play in one hand may well set you up for greater wins in a later hand due to the metagame.

A few important metagame points.

- Don't use it as an excuse to make bad plays.
- The Poker Metagame changes with time.
- Metagame plays are used more frequently against familiar players.

Although the above example highlights how making a slightly “less profitable” play could pay off in the future, it should not be used as an excuse to regularly make poor decisions when you're playing poker. Neither should you look to go out of your way to intentionally make unprofitable plays with the loose hope of creating an image that will pay off on future hands. Every now and then a metagame-style situation will crop up and make itself apparent, so don't fret about searching for it too much.

The meta game in poker is always changing. For example, when Doyle Brunson first wrote the book “Super System”, it contained top notch strategy for NL Holdem at the time it came out. However, over the years players have become more [aggressive \(../general/aggression/\)](#), and so the general [style of play \(../general/playing-styles/\)](#) advocated in the book will not be as profitable as it once was.

Poker metagame evaluation.

In general, **meta game plays are going to be more effective against opponents that you have played against regularly and have a history with.** This is because of the fact that you will have an understanding of the way your opponent plays, and so you will know “what makes them tick” and how to combat their style of play.

Although the meta game approach can be used against players you are unfamiliar with (for example, betting against players with mediocre to strong hands at lower limits because they tend to call more often with weak holdings), it is going to play a bigger role in your decisions against players who you have sat down with at the tables before.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](#).

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A **Anthony X Mandich**
0 points · 6 years ago

I have "metaballs" will that help my metagame

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 6 years ago

Hah ha, ya that seems to be helping my game also.

G **Greg**
0 points · 3 years ago

Undoubtedly.

A **Anthony X Mandich**
0 points · 3 years ago

Excellent

K **K K**
0 points · 8 years ago

Thank you so much for sharing your knowledge.

G **Greg**
0 points · 3 years ago

No problem.

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Home ► Strategy ► Psychology ► Multiple Level Thinking ►

Multiple Level Thinking

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#)

Whenever you sit down at the poker table, you should always be trying to outsmart and out-think your opponents by keeping one step ahead of them at all times. It is for this reason that people with the ability to clearly think through situations and act upon them have the ability to do well at the poker table.



If you are unable to piece together different pieces of information to build a bigger picture of the way each hand is played out, you will find that you will struggle to make much money from poker.

Being able to work out why your opponent is playing in a certain way is an essential skill for any winning poker player.

If you can figure out what your opponent may be holding, you can make the most profitable decisions in each situation depending on what information you have managed to pick up.

The levels of thought in poker.

Working out what your opponent may be holding is not easy, and it relies on your ability to think on a number of different levels. "Multiple Level Thinking" is a concept that was brought forward by David Sklansky in his book *NL Holdem Theory and Practice* (<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/188068537X?ie=UTF8&tag=thpoba-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=188068537X>), and defines the different levels of thought that a poker player can occupy:

- **Level 0:** No thinking.
- **Level 1:** What do I have?
- **Level 2:** What do they have?
- **Level 3:** What do they think I have?

- **Level 4:** What do they think I think they have?
- **Level 5:** What do they think I think they think I have?

I think I should probably leave it there now because of the fact that it is unlikely that any players will be thinking above this level, in addition to the fact that it is getting pretty difficult for me to even write down and comprehend at such a high level. But hopefully as you can see, you can think on different levels whilst playing poker, with the most inexperienced players playing at level 0 or 1 and the more advanced players of the game playing at 4 or above.

Overview of the different levels.

Level 0 isn't really much of a level, but I have thrown it in there to describe players who have no idea about the rules of the game, or players who are [playing poker drunk \(/articles/online/playing-drunk/\)](/articles/online/playing-drunk/) and have no idea about what they are doing.

Level 1 is again pretty basic, and will mainly apply to players who have just got to grips with the rules of the game and are just about aware of the different [hand ranks \(../articles/basics/hand-rank/\)](/articles/basics/hand-rank/) that apply to the game of poker. Therefore they will spend the majority of their time trying to figure out how strong their hand is, and thus if they have much of an opportunity to win the hand. Level 1 players will have difficulty [bluffing \(../basic/bluffing/\)](/basic/bluffing/), as their bluffs will be made regardless of what they think their opponent may be holding.

Level 2 is the category that most poker players will fall in to, as it encapsulates the players who have had some experience in the game, but are probably not quite yet winning players. These players will consider what their opponent will be holding, but probably do not quite yet have enough knowledge of the game to make plays based on [mathematics \(../mathematics/\)](/mathematics/) or the correct strategy for each situation.

Level 3 players will be winning players as they are always actively thinking about the thoughts of the other poker players around them, and so they are more aware of optimum situations for bluffing and can make more accurate [value bets \(../concepts/value-betting/\)](/concepts/value-betting/). The difference between a level 2 and 3 player is the roughly difference between that of a losing player and a winning player.

level 4 is where things start to get tricky, but the more advanced players will be able to grasp hold of the thought processes at this level and use it to their advantage. However, even if a player is able to think at this level it is unlikely that they will ever need to use this ability, as there are not many players who will be able to think at the same level as them.

Level 5 is where things start to get ridiculous, and I don't think there is much use in me going through it. I had a hard enough time writing it down, so I'm not sure how good my explanation would be if I tried. But if you ever come across someone playing at this level, my advice would be to leave the table as quickly as possible.

SUPER HI DEF HD quality - Phil Ivey vs Paul Jackson Poker ...



Watch this. Phil Ivey shows you everything you need to know about multiple level thinking.

I'd tell you to mute the commentary, but you need the audio to hear the betting action.

What does multiple level thinking mean to you?

The main reason as to why it is important to know about the different levels of thought is so that you can save yourself from playing incorrectly against different types of players (</videos/splitsuit/player-types/>). There is no point playing at level 3 if your opponent is playing at level 0, because there is no need to consider what your opponent thinks you have if they don't even have any idea about what they are holding themselves. You will just be 'over thinking' the situation and wasting you time and effort.

Therefore to beat each type of player, you should always stick to thinking at one level above your opponents only. If you find that a player is only concerned about what they are holding and playing at level 1, you will be able to beat them by thinking about what they might be holding and playing at level 2.

To beat any type of poker player, you simply need to be playing 1 level above them. Not 2 or 3, just 1.

Therefore you should be able to bluff them successfully whereas they will not as they are not giving any thought to the strength of your hand. There is no need to make extravagant plays against a low level thinker because they will have no idea about what is taking place, which will make it more likely that your 'advanced' play will backfire.

So for every opponent you play against, simply play at the level above him or her and you will be able to employ a successful winning poker playing style against them. The higher the level of thought you can use effectively the better, but also be prepared to adapt depending on the level of your opponents. This applies to all levels from 0 and above.

Multiple level thinking evaluation.

As a general rule, you should stick to playing at one level above your opponent in order to beat them. It is not easy to categorize your opponents as they do not come with signs informing you of their level of thought, but you can make decent judgments by analyzing the way they play.

To become a winning player you should be able to play at level 3, but this does not mean that you should play at this level at all times. You should be flexible and change your level of thought depending on your opponent, and you will find that you will be making more profitable plays in the long run.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy_\(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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E **El Boogey-man Sanchez**
0 points · 11 years ago

Its easy to read a bluff. Leave them be. Now when you get your hand Hold em,

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

I know you are writing this from all kinds of books, but becouse you are expalining it the way you do, it became so much easy for us to understand. I think I have 30+ pdf books from the major writters in domain brunson-greenstein, but to understand what I already understood by reading you web site in a couple of hours, I will have to read 5k pages from thoes books. So thank you very much, you are doing a great job if this was you intension (appart from linking to ... ;))

Ps: I played poker from when I was 8-9 years old (20years ago) but majority only at level 1 and 2 just now I realised.

Ps2: I will keep reading every thing you've got on this web site (first from guide and after from strategy because I so are a little bit diferent) so hoppefully after I will understand and remain with 80 % of the information inside my brain, I will start making money and become a pro! This is my goal.

G **Greg**
0 points · 9 years ago

Thank you Van. I know it's kinda cliché, but I can't put across how much your comment helps.

If you happen to see this message again, I hope things are running good.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 9 years ago

I wear my flip flops at night

N **Nick**
0 points · 9 years ago

I concur! It is a great site!

J **Jax**
0 points · 7 years ago

This is a surprisingly underrated facet of poker - or perhaps not underrated, but not spoken about in great detail (whereas newer players will typically look hard at the maths instead). A combination of level 3+, good strategy and mathematical understanding will go a long way. In particular, being able to play a level above the opponent while having position will lead to winning many pots that you may otherwise not have been a part of, or folded from.



Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

Fantastic, and often under-stated point. This concept is definitely incorporated into some of the other articles (and a little bit common-sense based), but putting it down explicitly brings my own thoughts about this into clearer focus. Thanks for all your articles!



Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

About level 4. If a possible straight gets there on the river and they think we think they have it because they make a big bet....

You either can beat that hand or you have the hand they are representing or they don't have that hand and you can pretend you have that hand to make them think you have that hand which seems to be what level 5 is.

But if they have that hand and you represent their hand you screw yourself unless they don't have that hand



Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

Its all in how level 2 and level 4 correspond to each other in your mind. Is he representing a good hand and you know hes lying or is he representing a good hand and you know hes telling the truth? If you have a clear idea of what he has (level 2) you can use that as basis for determining if you believe that big bet and whether he really does have what hes representing. Then if you dont, you know he thinks you think he does and you can make a larger big bet and he will think you have it because he thought you thought he had it. But Level 5 would be if he knew all of that and reraised (3 bet) because he knew you knew he lied and only raised (2 bet) because of that, not because you had the hand he represented. He would be thinking about what you think he thinks you have.



Nick

0 points · 9 years ago

God ... think is a really weird word.

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You need to get some bitcoin (/bitcoin/) to play here, but it's worth it.

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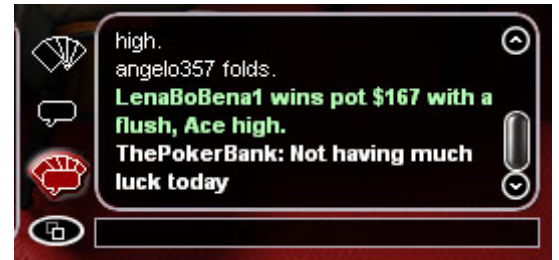
Home ► Strategy ► Psychology ► Chat Box ►

Poker Chat Box Strategy

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

Note: After reading through this article as of September 2008, I think that the advice given here is now a little outdated. I wouldn't advise that you incorporate this advice into your everyday strategy. Nonetheless, I am going to keep this article here for anyone interested!

Almost every online poker room today has a chat box feature. This feature allows you to communicate with the other players at the table like you can at live tables.



The online poker chat box has spawned numerous abbreviations over the years to save time whilst typing. Below is a list of the most commonly used abbreviations:

NH - Nice Hand

NB - Nice Bet

NC - Nice Call

GG - Good Game

WP - Well Played

BRB - Be Right Back

CU - See You

WTF - What The F***

TY - Thank You

THX - Thanks

Live poker and tells.

Professional players will regularly talk to the other players at the table in live play (if it is permitted) to try and obtain extra information of their opponent's hands and their ability to play poker. These professionals will not only be analyzing what you say, but the manner in which you

say it.

By stimulating conversation, opponents will be trying to invoke physical tells which they can then use to judge the strength of your hand. The chat box will never be able to completely emulate live discussion; therefore the amount of information you can gain through the chat box is greatly reduced.

How to use the chat box to our advantage.

However, if we are to use the chat box to our advantage, we have to look at the feature from a different angle. Instead of trying to get information from our opponents, we should be trying to *give information to our opponents*. It is far easier to portray an image of yourself rather than extract information using the chat box feature. So what are we trying to portray, and how are we going to portray it?

The last thing we want to do is give the impression that we are experienced poker players, so we don't want to be talking about [reverse implied odds](#) ([../../mathematics/reverse-implied-odds/](#)), or the [gap concept](#) ([../../concepts/gap-concept/](#)) in the chat box. This will make our opponents wary of our raises, which won't help when trying to build monster pots.

We want to make the other players think that we are recreational and/or poor players who can't lay down mediocre hands, and that we think poker is purely a game of luck. By doing this we are setting ourselves up to win bigger pots, because our opponents will have the impression that they will have the better hand when we are calling their raises.

So now we are looking to make our opponents think that we are substandard players. We have to approach this carefully so that our image is authentic; so unfortunately, typing "I'm s***" into the chat box just isn't going to cut it. The most convincing way of portraying an inexperienced image is by giving opinions on hands that have just been played. The art comes in making what we say subtle yet convincing. The following is a list of things that can be said at the table at certain times to help get you started on giving everyone the impression that you are a poor player:

- **"Not having as much luck today"** - After folding or losing a pot.
- **"Any two cards can win"** - At any time
- **"Knew I should have called"** - After folding and seeing the next card when others carry on with the hand (despite whether or not the card would have helped you)

Chat box strategy overview.

This is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to things you can say in the chat box to give yourself the inexperienced image. Anything that contradicts good poker strategy is good enough to be typed into the chat box. Just make sure that you do not go over the top, as over-use of the chat feature will lower the integrity of what you are saying.

You should also remember that this little trick wont have monster pots falling at your feet, but it should help in stimulating a little extra action when opponents come to play hands against you.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy_\(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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? **Anonymous**
0 points · 11 years ago

I am interested in why you say the article is now outdated. What do you see as having changed particularly?

M **Mickey Brenneman**
0 points · 7 years ago

because everybody likes to multitable and nobody looks at the chat box while multitabling

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

how do you get what you say on display?

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Home ► Strategy ► Psychology ► Bad Beats ►

How To Overcome Bad Beats

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

There is very little in poker that can throw you off of your game in such a dramatic way as a *bad beat* can. Dropping from the high of being all in on the flop with top set against two over cards, to the low of being outdrawn to a runner-runner flush is enough to make the biggest poker fan hate the game.



Despite this however, **it is far more important than you think to deal with the frustration before playing your next hand.**

A common mistake.

Its not uncommon for a player to chase after the money they unjustly lost for the rest of the session. Players will try and pull huge [bluffs \(/../basic/bluffing/\)](#) and call for any draw whilst adopting the mentality of "If they can win with rags, then so can I".

I'm sure as you read this you can recall a time when you have been in exactly the same position, trying your hardest to get back the money that's sitting in the lap of the luckiest player in the world. But do you get it back? More often than not you are losing more money in this imprudent pursuit.

This is probably one of the main reasons why you currently [can't win money playing online poker \(/../../articles/questions/why-lose-money/\)](#).

How can you get over a bad beat?

It all seems so obvious now, just stop the [tilting](#) and save yourself some money. But lets be honest, its never going to be that easy. Some beats are so bad that they can **cloud your mind to all rationality** and you fritter away your remaining chips on that ten-high flush draw. But there are things you can do to help stop such an obvious leak of chips:

1) *Take a break.*

Honestly, there is nothing better for saving your hard earned money than taking a break from the game. Whether that be for a few moments or for a few days, it's the most effective way of preserving your bankroll from tilt.

Just because you leave the game now, it doesn't mean you've lost the opportunity to win your money back; in fact it's probably the opposite. Let yourself cool down and come back when you are in a rational frame of mind. There is always going to be a game of poker in the next ten minutes, the next week, and even next year. Save yourself for when you can play at the top of your game.

2) *Think in terms of expectation.*

Simply put, think of the money you expected to win on the particular hand that you lost with. This can be done with the use of freely available odds calculators (like [PokerStove](#) ([../tools/software/pokerstove/](#))). For example, if you are all in holding AA against AK pre-flop, you are roughly 90% favorite to win the hand (also know as [pot equity](#) ([../mathematics/equity/](#))).

So you can say you won 90% of what was in that pot - FULL STOP. The 10% chance of losing means that you *expect* to lose in this situation occasionally, and this time you just got caught up in that 10% chance. You may end up losing that particular hand but in the long run you will be winning more.

See the article on [Sklansky dollars](#) ([../mathematics/sklansky-dollars/](#)) for more information on this concept. It's a good read.

Bad beats evaluation.

Bad beats are an integral part of poker, so **if you want to become a long term winner you are going to have to get used to them.** If there were no such things as bad beats, then most of us would never have a losing session. But on the positive side, bad beats are what keep the bad players and soft competition (/rooms/toplists/softest/) coming back. It tricks them into thinking they made the right play, or that poker is always about luck. And for that we should be thankful.

For more information on bad beats, BeatTheFish has a great article for further reading: Poker Bad Beats (http://www.beatthefish.com/poker-strategy/poker-bad-beats.html) .

Go back to the awesome Texas Hold'em Strategy (/strategy/).

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? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

Solid article.

Y **young**
0 points · 7 years ago

A bad beat is when 4 of a kind gets beat by a straight flush, and one should just never be too upset about those unfortunate situations, because you will never be able to fold..ever

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Poker Downswings

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#)

For more general information on downswings in NL Hold'em, see the article on [variance in poker \(/../other/variance/\)](#).

Every regular poker player knows that you can't come out of every poker session with more money than you started with. There are always going to be sessions where you end up losing more than you win, and often there is very little that you could have done to prevent it.



Even though poker involves a certain amount of skill, **luck is something that is always going to be a big influence on the outcome of each individual session**, and it always will be. Any poker player that plays regularly enough will find that luck gets the better of us sometimes for longer periods than we would like, and for some, this stretch can seem never ending.

Facing a big downswing in poker.

As a frequent player at the cash or tournament tables, we are prepared to lose 2 or 3 buy ins or not place in a number of tournaments from time to time, its just the way it goes. But occasionally, although it doesn't happen very often, a 2 or 3 buy in loss will just be the tip of the iceberg. We will come face to face with a seemingly never-ending stretch of bad cards and busted draws.

So what goes wrong?

Every coin flip all-in goes the other way, none of the draws hit, and we manage to miss every single flop that we see. Even our AKs seem to get beat every time by hands like AQ and AJ. "Surely it's just [variance \(/../other/variance/\)](#)" you say to yourself and its not going to be long before you get back on track and your hands start holding up again like they should. But as soon as you start to regain some of your faith, another Ace falls on the flop when holding KK.

The effect of a big poker downswing.

The problem with these huge downswings is that they are completely out of our control, and there is no amount of perfect play and good reads that can stop you from going down with the swing. As the swing gets bigger, you start to question your game and wonder if you have lost the ability you once had to win money from poker.

This can then lead to you altering your game to see if you can improve and win some of your money back, but the new [style of play \(../general/playing-styles/\)](#) is usually worse and just ends up losing you more money than if you had just stuck with your normal game. Players always want to know how to deal with big poker downswings, so the questions always end up being:

- Where am I going wrong?
- What can I do to stop the downswing?

The answers are pretty simple... nowhere and nothing. Even though these are the honest answers to the questions, they probably didn't help and probably didn't put your mind too much at ease. If you are a solid player and continue to play your best game at all times, then you are doing nothing wrong.

You have to remember that every hits a big poker downswing from time to time, and it's simply a bad dose of variance slapping you about for a few sessions.

The only thing that is going wrong is your ability to have a bit of good luck once in a while, and there is nothing you can do to get that back on track. Therefore because you have no control over your luck, there is nothing you can do about the downswing. Once again, these probably weren't the kind of kind of answers you wanted to hear.

How to get out of a big downswing.

The best advice anyone can give to someone in the middle of endless losing sessions is to remember that there is light at the end of the tunnel, no matter how long it may seem sometimes. Eventually the cards will right themselves and you will start to win some more of the coin flips and your bankroll will be on the road to recovery.

Try to maintain a positive attitude and play the game you know best at all times. If your same style of play allows you to win money for months and months, it does not make it a losing style just because you haven't seen any wins for a few weeks. If the big blow to your bankroll is having

an affect on your ability to play, the best advice then is to take a break from the game and put poker at the back of your mind for a while.

A week-long break is usually perfect for helping you to snap out of a negative frame of mind and get your game back on track.

Give it some time before you start playing again so that when you come back you can start afresh, the bad losing streak that you had will no longer be of any concern and you can carry playing the way you know how.

Poker downswings evaluation.

Poker is a game of ups and downs, and unfortunately, the downs always feel a lot worse than the ups. There is nothing that you can do to stop the long losing sessions, you just have to let the downswing take its course and ride it out as best as you can.

Always try and maintain focus even when you are at your lowest, because by playing your best game you will be minimizing any losses that you may have. Every poker player experiences very bad runs and bad beats ([../bad-beats/](#)), so just try your best to play through it until you are back on the up. You never know, the biggest upswing of your life might be just around the corner...

Related articles.

- [Objectivity In Poker \(/videos/wilcox/articles/objectivity-in-poker/\)](#)

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy_\(/strategy/\)](#).

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? **Anonymous**
0 points · 11 years ago

The truth to handling losing sessions is to learn that hold em is still gambling in fact if your having losing sessions your playing the right way. I read in ken warrens hold'em for beginners when I first started to play that only one in twenty poker pros are consistent winners the rest all take bankroll shifts so if you win 1000 one day and lose 500 the next then win 1500 the next then lose everything your on track why do you think pros stress bankroll management playing in position premium hands pot odds etc are things that give you an edge not a guaranteed victory if you play poker you have to get use to the concept of making a fortune and losing it pros go broke all the time not because of bad play but this game is a constant up and down roller coaster for your wallet.

S **Stefan**
0 points · 10 years ago

There's no going broke from any huge downswing if you know bankroll management. There's no "making a fortune and losing it" because a good player would never put that whole fortune on the table. That's what most people don't understand. If you ask anyone who doesn't play poker and is not interested, they will say something like "Don't ever play that, it's all about luck, there are people who even lose their house because of gambling". Well, if they're stupid enough to gamble, they do.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 10 years ago

Best Site For all poker players

G **Greg**
0 points · 10 years ago

Would be inclined to agree.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

This page literally is useless.....everything that is said is just common logic and there seems to be no reason to even write this page....ive been cursed for going on 3 months now and no it doesnt seem to ever end....however i am not biased and have had great success in the past....math cannot even define how

impossible this streak has been.....im pissed off and this page literally is just stupid and made me more angry!!



Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

What is even less logical is you writing this comment. Pwned.



Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

Thanks for the tips. I have been losing very often these days. I shall take a rest.



Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

The inherent downswings and massive mathematical variance make Texas Hold'em an unattractive game for a truly casual player with a limited bankroll.

If you cannot properly stake yourself into games (i.e. multiple hundred buyins for SNG etc.), do not play poker. This is the wrong game for you.

While skills, reading, knowing pot odds, implied pot odds etc. will always have a big part in the game, luck will also matter massively. This will never change, the rules of the game will never change. There will be 52 cards in the deck and even a straight flush will once in a while lose to a royal flush.

In an extreme scenario that could even happen multiple times in a row; It's nothing against you personally, it's how mathematics work.

To sum it up for lazy readers: If you do not have enough money, do not play online poker. You *will* lose out in the long run if you can't balance downswings with a deep stack of money & cover it back when you get on the winning track. That's how Texas Hold'em works. It is not entirely a game of skill as many would romantically prefer to think.



Eyþór Guðmundsson

0 points · 12 years ago

LOL. this page is Great, has helped me a lot, and i dont know what Fritzl (lol) was looking for, the cure for bad streaks... stop whining and work on your game, i had my biggest losing session of my short career last night, but i dont go around trollin forums... pull your pants up mate, what greg is doing here is priceless and not like he's asking for your money....



Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

As usual, another solid article. Every time I scroll down to the article I'm reading, I think I must have read them all (which I plan to do before tackling the video section), but every time, I'm hit with yet another link! (And that's a good thing!) Thanks for doing what you do.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

Helped me alot too. Just had a session last night that no matter what i did i would lose to a hand slightly better. i couldnt even say it was because i played like a donk, my raising hands PF were solid, got called from weaker hands (which is what you want), its just that those weaker hands always hit(what you dont want). just a sick night, even the other players at the table couldnt belive i could be running this bad. still feel sick about it

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Tilting In Poker

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).



"Tilting" is a term used in poker to describe the way a player changes his or her game due to the effects of suffering a bad beat. If a player takes a bad beat, they can be described as "going on tilt" if they subsequently play differently to the way they would usually play.

In a nutshell, 'tilting' is simply a word to describe poor play due to frustration at the poker table.

There are many things in poker, apart from bad beats, that will potentially set you on tilt. If you do not catch any good hands for a long period of time, you can easily become frustrated and start to play with any rag hand that comes your way.

If you find yourself folding to your opponent's shown [bluff \(/../basic/bluffing/\)](#), then once again you can become irritated and allow your game to deviate from the norm. In addition, if you notice that you would have [flopped a monster \(/videos/splitsuit/flopped-monsters/\)](#) but decided to fold pre-flop ([/../hand-guide/preflop/](#)), this can also cause you to alter your game for the worse.

Degrees of tilt in poker.

There are different degrees and varieties of 'tilt'. Some players have the misconception that going on tilt means going all-in with any old hand pre-flop after taking a bad beat, just to vent your frustration. Although you may see this occasionally happen at the table, there are many more subtle forms of tilt that should not be ignored if you want to improve your game.

Tilting is not always simply moving all-in on a random hand due to frustration from a bad beat.

Every time you enter a pot with an opponent because you are looking to even the score with them because of the way they previously outplayed you or lucked out, you are going on tilt. You may elect to play more pots with a certain person in an attempt to outplay them on following streets, possibly because they had taken some of your money in an earlier hand.

Every time you do this you are effectively on tilt, because you have to ask the question: "**Would I be playing so many hands against this person if I had no problem with them?**" Furthermore, you are unnecessarily risking more of your money if you constantly try and outplay them with the worst hand. Always remember that in poker that you are looking to win money, and not pots.

A common mistake whilst on tilt.

A typical and possibly the **most common form of tilt is to chase draws**.

If you are faced with a decent size bet against your flush draw, yet you willingly call without the correct [pot odds \(../mathematics/pot-odds/\)](#), you are on tilt. After all, would you have called the same bet if you were in a rational state of mind?

No matter how close the odds were to being in your favour, if you still call in an attempt to make your hand when you normally would fold, you are not playing your A-game. It is a common reaction for a player to chase after money that they have lost when on an unlucky streak; therefore this emotion lends itself nicely to the structure of a drawing hand in poker.

Playing at higher stakes when tilting.

The reaction to chase money that has been lost can cause you to play higher stakes and play out of your bankroll and ignore very important [bankroll management \(../basic/bankroll-management/\)](#) rules. This is especially dangerous as not only are you playing at stakes you cannot afford, but you may well be coupling it with the typical 'tilt plays' as mentioned above.

This magnifies the severity of your tilt as you put yourself in a position where you could potentially lose a great sum of money that took you a long time to earn. The vision of being able to claw back all that you have lost or possibly turn a profit at the higher stakes clouds your mind to rationality, and more often than not you will find yourself in an unhappy position in the end.

Poker tilting evaluation.

Successful players have the ability to offset the effects of tilt, which is why they are capable of being winning players at the end of the day. Going on tilt is especially dangerous in pot limit and no limit poker, because of the potential that most or all of your chips are at stake in any given hand.

You can spend hours making money through good play, only to lose it all in one hand because you went on tilt. Never forget that money saved is money earned. The more money you save yourself from losing, the more you can add to your total winnings at the end of the day.

If you continue to play whilst on tilt, you shouldn't have to wonder [why you can't win money from online poker \(../../articles/questions/why-lose-money/\)](https://pokerstrategy.com/strategy/questions/why-lose-money/).

For further reading about how you can offset the effects of tilt, try [how to overcome bad beats \(../bad-beats/\)](https://pokerstrategy.com/strategy/bad-beats/).

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](https://pokerstrategy.com/strategy/).

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Poker Table Image

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

“ *All warfare is based on deception.*

Sun Tzu, The Art of war

When sitting at the poker table, it is important to be aware of your own "table image" and the image of the players around you. *Table image* is essentially what one poker player perceives another player's style to be, which is determined by the way they play poker.



For example, if a player is not playing many hands and only entering pots with premium [starting hands \(/../basic/starting-hand-selection/\)](#), the other players at the table may perceive that player to be very tight, and thus they will have a tight table image.

Consequently, if a player is entering many pots and calling raises frequently, they may be perceived as being a loose player, and thus they will have a loose table image.

What influences table image?

Your table image is constructed primarily from the way you play poker, but it also can be influenced by the way you conduct yourself whilst you are at the table. It is normal for players to build an image through their individual [style of play \(/../general/playing-styles/\)](#), whether that be tight or loose, but sometimes what you say or do at the table could potentially overshadow this and portray a different style of play to your opponents.

Your table image will be influenced by the way you play your cards the vast majority of the time.

If you are loud and talkative at the table, your opponents may feel that you are having a good time and are likely to play a number of hands for the entertainment, and this will create a loose table image.

Conversely, if you are quiet and reserved then you may be able to have the other players perceive you as being a tight player. However, the more advanced and observant players will look straight through what you say or do, and let the cards do the talking for when it comes to mentally assigning you a style of play.

The importance of table image.

Table image is important is because it will influence the way your opponents play their hands against you.

On a basic level...

Loose image

If you have a loose table image, you may find that opponents are more willing to get into pots with you because they will know that your starting hand requirements will be lower than that of a tight player's.

Tight image

If you have a tight table image, your opponents will be more reluctant to get into pots with you because they will fear that you will have a big hand every time you enter a pot. Both of these styles of play have their own unique benefits.

The benefit of a tight image.

Essentially, the tight table image is beneficial because you are always going to be entering pots with good hands, and therefore if you only play these premium starting hands, it makes sense that you will win more pots than you lose. In addition, your opponents will continually be concerned about the strength of your hand if you have created a tight table image for yourself.

Therefore you will be able to successfully bluff your opponents more frequently than if you had a loose image, and pick up the occasional extra pot with the worst hand. The main downfall with having a tight image is that you are less likely to get paid off on some of your big hands because your opponents will believe that you have a good hand when you bet, so they will fold.

The benefit of a loose image.

Having a loose style of play also has its own set of benefits...

Whereas if you are playing tight your opponents will fold when you have big hands, you are more likely to get paid off with these big hands if you have a loose table image. This is because to create this loose image you will have been betting and raising frequently on previous hands, therefore your opponents will know that you can't have a strong hand every time and call you down in the hope that you are [bluffing](#) ([../basic/bluffing/](#)).

It must be said however that **just because you are playing loosely, it does not mean that you will get paid off on all of your big hands**. It simply means that you will get your opponents to call you down with a higher frequency than if you had a tight table image.

The main downfall with this image is that you leave yourself open to losing a number of chips whilst trying to create this loose image. By entering a number of pots with substandard hands, you can potentially find yourself in tricky situations with marginal hands and therefore losing chips in the process.

Poker table image evaluation.

As you can see, both the loose table image and the tight table image have their pros and cons. However, it is hard to say which one out of the two of these would prove to be the most profitable in the long run. Both of these images and styles of play can be used and employed profitably at the poker table if used correctly. Nevertheless it is fair to say that you will experience a greater amount of [variance](#) ([../other/variance/](#)) playing the loose style and having a loose image than if you had a tight table image.

Both the loose and tight table images have their benefits, but having a loose table image tends to reap greater rewards.

You should also be aware that table image is only useful if your opponents are actively taking notice of the way you play. If your opponents are not concerned about the way you are playing, then you cannot create a table image. This is mainly true at the [micro stakes \(../general/micro-limits/\)](https://general/micro-limits/), where opponents are primarily interested in the way they are playing their own hands. Therefore the importance of table image increase as you move up the stakes and play against more advanced players.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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The 3-Bet

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).**3-Betting**
+ 3-Betting Light

The 3-bet (or more specifically, *light* 3-betting) is an advanced concept that adds an extra weapon to a game that has likely become repetitive and stagnant, even if that current game strategy is winning you money at the tables.

3-betting will shake up a mid-stakes player's game about as much as the [continuation bet](#) ([../../plays/continuation-bet/](#)) did when you first found out about that when you were starting out.

This concept is going to be most useful in mid-stakes games between \$50NL and \$200NL.

- [What is 3-betting?](#) ↗
- [Why 3-bet?](#) ↗
- [When and where to 3-bet light.](#) ↗
- [How to 3-bet effectively.](#) ↗

What is 3-betting and 3-betting light?

3-betting.

First of all, what is a *3-bet* before the flop?

A 3-bet is when there has been a raise and then another raise after that.

Simple enough, but let me give you one quick example to drive it home: After the [SB..\(\)](#) and [BB..\(\)](#) post the \$1 and \$2 blinds, lets say there is a raise to \$8 from a player in [MP...\(\)](#). If another player in [LP...\(\)](#) raises it again to \$24, this is called a 3-bet.

For a quick guide to good 3bet sizing, watch the 3betting section starting at 13:39 in this

As you can imagine, the guy (or girl) making the 3-bet probably has a very good hand. You would normally expect them to be holding something like QQ+ or AK to make this second raise before the flop.

You might be wondering why it's called a 3-bet if there has only been two raises. Well, the BB is actually considered to be a bet in itself, and so the first raise is the 2nd bet and the second raise is the 3-bet.

3-betting light.

As mentioned, you would expect the player making the 3-bet to have a very strong hand like QQ+ or AK. Therefore, 3-betting light is when you make a 3-bet with a less than premium hand like 67, 78 or any suited connector like that.

3-betting light is where you make a 3-bet with a less than premium hand before the flop.

Seems crazy and dangerous I know, but I'm sure you thought the same thing when you first heard about continuation betting. 3-betting light can be an incredibly +EV (</strategy/mathematics/expected-value/>) move when used correctly, so don't underestimate its strength.

Why 3-bet?

Players these days will make preflop raises with a wide range of hands. If a player makes a raise before the flop in LP, they could have almost any hand under the sun. That's how all decent TAGs play.

Calling these raises with a strong hand of our own (or even with a drawing hand like 78s) puts us at a disadvantage because our opponent will have the initiative in the hand. When the flop comes, we are only really looking to fold unless we hit top pair or better. Even then, we are not going to feel great about our hand.

3-betting when in position will regularly put loose raisers in a position where it is -EV to call a 3-bet because of their wide opening range. Not to mention taking away their initiative.

The advantages of 3-betting.

- Players open with a wide range of hands, which means calling 3-bets is -EV for our opponents.
- 3-betting can often be far more +EV than just calling in some cases.
- Players almost always fear AA when they face a 3-bet. This gives us tremendous leverage for the flop (so cbet!).
- You take back the initiative in the hand.
- Opponents will call you down with much weaker hands in future if they see you 3-bet so lightly ([metagame strategy_\(/strategy/psychology/metagame/\)](/strategy/psychology/metagame/)).

Sure, making an extra reraise before the flop is going to be pretty damn scary, especially if you are 3-betting light. However, if its going to be a +EV play you need to show some balls and play in the way that is going to make you the most money.

Don't get me wrong though, 3-betting light isn't just to try and punish the loose raisers and hope that they fold. There will be times when we get called when we 3-bet light, but that's not a problem. There are still advantages to 3-betting light when we reach the flop.

When and where to 3-bet light.

So we've discussed the advantages of the simple 3-bet, but when should you 3-bet light?

- You want to 3-bet light with mid connectors/suited connectors like 67, 78 and 89, or 1 gap suited connectors like 68 and 79.
- You should 3-bet light in position. Playing a 3-bet pot out of position is tricky (although not impossible).
- You should mostly 3-bet raisers from LP. Raisers from EP are more likely to turn up with a strong hand.
- You should try 3-betting light against TAG (Tight-Aggressive) and semi-TAG players.

An optimum spot to 3-bet light is when a TAG from LP makes a raise when you are on the button or in the CO.



Apologies for the God-awful diagram, but you should get the idea. These sort of players are likely to be raising with a wide range of hands in this position, and so are fully capable of folding when they come up against aggression (</strategy/general/aggression/>). This is why 3-betting gives us an edge.

An important point to remember is that you do not want to 3-bet light against players who are either:

1. Super tight and are only going to raise with supreme hands. Hence our 3-bet definitely gets called.
2. Super loose and will call regardless. We lose all of our fold equity (</strategy/mathematics/equity/fold/>) in the hand with these players.

This is not the only ever spot that you can 3-bet, but if you keep these guidelines in mind you should be able to get a feel for when it's a +EV spot to 3-bet.

How to 3-bet.

In a nutshell, when you 3-bet light you ideally want your opponent to fold. This gives you an instant and nicely-sized pot and will usually force your opponent to tighten up the hands they open with from late position.

If we get called and miss the flop, we are almost always in the perfect situation to make a continuation bet and take down then pot. So don't be afraid to make that cbet, it's a +EV move over the long run. That's the basics of it, but allow me to explain a little further.

- Hands not to 3-bet light with. ↴
- What to do on the flop if you are called. ↴

- 3-betting light example. ↗

Hands not to 3-bet light with.

The type of hands that you do not want to 3-bet light with are lower tier Broadway hands like;

[KQ](#) ([/videos/splitsuit/inverse-5/](#)), KJ QJ and also weaker aces like [AJ](#) ([/videos/splitsuit/inverse-3/](#)). (definitely not [rag aces](#) ([/strategy/hands/rag-aces/](#)), either). The problem is that if you are 3-betting with these cards, the hands that your opponent is going to call with are going to have you dominated (e.g. AQ+, JJ+).

However, if you have a lower suited connector like 78s, you still have two "free" cards that you can do damage with. It also makes post-flop play easier as you are less likely to get tied in with a marginal hand where you hold something like top pair weak kicker.

Stick to 3-betting premiums (QQ+, AK) and lower suited connectors (56 - 9T) only.

You are better off calling with less than premium Broadway hands rather than 3-betting with them preflop.

What to do on the flop if you are called.

If you miss the flop, make a continuation bet of about **2/3 the size of the pot**. Simple as that.

A pot size bet is unnecessarily large in a 3-bet pot. 2/3 does the job and saves us money for when it doesn't work out.

The beauty of 3-betting is that it gives you supreme power in the hand. Your opponent is always going to have the fear that you have [pocket Aces](#) ([../hands/pockets/aces/](#)) or [pocket Kings](#) ([/strategy/hands/pockets/kings/](#)) at the forefront of their mind, so take advantage of that fear. If on the odd occasion you get called, check/call on the turn and be done with the hand. The majority of the time a good continuation bet will work wonders though.

If on the other hand you catch a piece of the flop but nothing worth value-betting, checking and calling may be the best option. However, **a lot of the time you are going to either have a strong hand or nothing at all, and in both of these situations you will want to cbet.**

3-betting light example.

Let's say our opponent is 26/18 and raises frequently from late position. This is a simple example:

EXAMPLE

SB: \$200

BB: \$200

UTG: \$200

MP: \$200

CO: \$200

Hero (BTN): \$200

Pre Flop: (\$3) Hero is BTN with 7♣ 8♣

1 fold, MP raises to \$8, 1 fold, Hero raises to \$30, 2 folds

Flop: (\$66) 2♠ J♥ 6♦ (2 players)

MP checks, Hero bets \$45, MP folds

Our opponent here clearly made a poor call when we 3-bet, as we represented a very strong hand like QQ+ or AK, so the chances are that he called with a hand like AJ+ and hoped for the best.

Even if our opponent did hold a hand like QQ or AJ, it is very difficult for them to call for the fear of us holding Aces or Kings, which is why the continuation bet brings home so much money due to the 3-bet before the flop.

Evaluation of 3-betting light.

This article is one of the longest I have ever written, yet I still feel that it could have been a bit meatier. Congratulations if you made it this far, and I hope most of it made sense and you can understand the theory behind 3-betting lightly and how it can be profitable.

Just be sure not to abuse 3-betting and you will be fine. 3-betting and 3-betting lightly can be very +EV in the right spots, but they can do a lot of damage to your stack if you are not careful with them. I'd recommend dropping down a level to experiment with 3-betting and to find your feet with it.

It's definitely a skill that is worth perfecting and adding to your game as a mid-stakes player (or for when you reach those levels).

PS. Don't forget to cbet if you miss the flop.

Related articles.

- [3Betting Preflop In The Micro Stakes \(/videos/wilcox/articles/3betting-preflop-in-the-micro-stakes/\)](/videos/wilcox/articles/3betting-preflop-in-the-micro-stakes/).
- [Attacking 3Bettors \(/videos/wilcox/articles/attacking-3bettors/\)](/videos/wilcox/articles/attacking-3bettors/).

[SplitSuit's *When 3Bets Go Wrong \(pt. 1\)* video \(/videos/splitsuit/when-3bets-go-wrong-1/\)](/videos/splitsuit/when-3bets-go-wrong-1/) looks at 9 different hand histories where Hero's 3bet gets called (or when another player 4bets). It's an excellent strategy video for playing in tricky 3bet spots.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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? **Anonymous**
0 points · 9 years ago

How about pocket like TT 99 88 77 66 55 44.....?
Should we 3bet these hand?

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 11 years ago

Just wondering, when you 3bet, how much do you raise on top of the additional raiser? I know a common bet is 3.5/4x BB but how much more? Double?

G

Greg

0 points · 11 years ago

About 2.5x is good for a 3bet.

So if they raise to \$3, I'd go for about \$7 or \$8. Obviously situational as ever, but 2.5x is a great starting point.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 6 years ago

Please answer the following say I am at button and 3 bets light with 9,10s:

- when blind raise
- when lp re-raised

A

Alex Mills

0 points · 6 years ago

I hope no one uses weapons

?

Anonymous

0 points · 6 years ago

amazing article. Thanks a lot!

?

Anonymous

0 points · 6 years ago

If A or K flop, can I assume LP has hit after calling my 3B

L

Lee Ramer

0 points · 6 years ago

I would say yes. After that you have to decide how much you are willing to risk losing by continuing to play to the river.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 13 years ago

brilliant article.. written in a simple way and easy to understand.
I would like to ask you a few more questions about 3bets. If possible add me on msn
Pedroo_Almeida@hotmail.com (mailto:Pedroo_Almeida@hotmail.com).
I won't take u more than 3min
cheers

V **Vin**
0 points · 8 years ago

What a nice article! This is by far the best website I've ran into so far. Everything is explained in a simple and effective way.
I do have a question though, you said that we should avoid 3-betting when our opponent is super loose, but is it ok to 3-bet if we have a premium hand in this case? Or if we have a hand that is good on the flop? And also, could you recommend me anything on how to fight these super loose players? 'Cause one of my friends just bets on every hand, and since no one else on the table is super loose too (most are actually pretty tight players), he ends up getting a lot of pots for free.
Thanks in advance!

L **Lee Ramer**
0 points · 6 years ago

What has worked for me is being very patient, I call a few hands and if the loose player continues to raise big on flop afterwards I fold if I don't hit with top pair. If I do I push all in. I also will push all in preflop with AA KK this usually makes them fold and then wary of you when you join the pot.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

Invaluable for the first time reader or the reviewer.. concise and logical for those of us who find it difficult to chill with marginal hands at the best of times. And so 3betting lightly is invaluable for the agro who needs to hone his skills and lower his spewing..!

L **larskyhnau**
0 points · 11 years ago

Hi Greg. This article is obviously a few years old now. In one of his videos Splitsuit mention, that games have matured, and regulars have adjusted to the flop C-bet, so that it is not showing any where near the same profit as back in 2007.

Would you say, that people have also adjusted to light 3-betting by tightening up their opening ranges and/or fighting back more? Or is it still a very novel move, that almost noone has heard of or adjusted to in any way?

I am asking, because it seems to me, that people are 3-betting so much these days, that it can hardly have the same kind of deceptive value, which it might have had, when the first players started to do it.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

You write with a clarity and conciseness which trumps most of the poker advice I've recently been studying; I've seen these ideas explained before but not so well written, congratulations, you should get a book published.

G **Greg**
0 points · 12 years ago

Thanks Mr. L. That's a tremendous compliment. Thank you.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

Really nice article :D However u mentioned that you shouldn't 3bet trashy aces. I have heard from several other articles/places, that u trash aces are nice to 3bet. because of the ace blocker and so on. u disagree with this??

G **Greg**
0 points · 11 years ago

Yes you're right, 3betting with AX isn't terrible because you do have that Ace blocker. This article is a brief intro to 3betting and I struggle to cover everything. 3betting with Ax is an easy added 1,000+ words haha. Hope this hasn't caused too much confusion. But you are correct. Thanks for mentioning.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

Thank you, very good work. I've been 3betting light a lot recently and it's been paying off but I still knew I had some things to learn, particularly on the cbetting side and this post has been very helpful for that, just the confirmation that I need to cbet a lot and that I don't need to cbet a huge % of the pot will save me a decent amount of money I'm sure.

One thing I noticed is that in live games after a 3 bet you only need to put in a half pot cbet to take it down because people are usually just calling you with speculative hands.

G **Greg**
0 points · 11 years ago

Thanks for the tip Scott. I don't play much live so this is interesting to hear.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 11 years ago

Do you think this will work at a table with a lot of callers??

L **larskyhnau**
0 points · 11 years ago

The more people are involved in a pot, the more likely it is, that at least one of them will call you. So you should definitely be hesitant about trying to run bluffs though multiple people, unless you just know, that the situation is going to be perfect for it.

J **John**
0 points · 9 years ago

hi
I had a situation earlier and i would be grateful if any of you guys could help me
I was in BB with QQ
Villain 1 in MP2 makes 3x raise
Villain 2 in the Cutoff calls
Me in BB made a 10x 3bet
Villain 1 calls
Villain 2 folds
My question is about preflop
was i right 3 bet my QQ being OOP?should i have called?3 bet less?Im clueless to what the best action in this spot is
BTW i was playing 4nl at 888.i have stats on both villains but sample in about 40 hands
Stay Fresh :D

J **Joe Schmo**
0 points · 9 years ago

The 3 bet in your case is pretty standard and nothing wrong with it in theory. You have a premium hand, and since you are in weaker position it is a smart play to raise it up and perhaps even take the pot down right there. You want to push one of the other guys out and go heads up with something like JJ or QQ so a flop showing an Ace or King has less of a chance of connecting with the other remaining player, making you more capable to continue your aggression on the flop with confidence without worrying about two people to act behind you. Especially since later position raise range widens a good bit, even if you get called on your 3 bet, you want someone with something like a A9-AJ and/or a weaker Broadway to pay to draw while behind and the bigger pot allows you to make a sizeable C bet on a missed board for them that puts them to the test. The bet size you made (I interpret by 10x you mean 10x the amount the other player raised, and not 10x the original BB amount) seems a little high if playing against pretty standard opponents.

At that point, most people that are going to call your bet are those that have you beat with AA or KK, or maybe someone with AK suited and you are flipping at best. Now, if you are playing against aggro maniacs that will call with any kind of Ace in their hand or suited Broadway, then maybe the 10x raise would be an option, but in general I think that raise is too high with QQ. You are pushing out all the good starting hands that you dominate (AJ, KQ, JJ, 1010, etc), so imo you lost value there. If I am going to 3 bet, I usually bet 2.5-3x the raise, and add a multiplier of 1 for every extra guy in the hand. So in your case with two others in, I probably would have 3 bet about 3.5-4x (so if BB was \$2, with a raise to \$8 and a call by a second player, I would prob jam in about \$28-32). Many players have differing opinions about play choices like this, but in my experience this strategy has worked pretty well for me and has been profitable.



Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

I only can agree with others, article is very good. Most importantly, easy to read and understand. I accidentally came across with this site, but know I think I should take a deep dive here ;)



Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

What's the difference between 3-betting light and bluffing ? Seems the same to me



larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

It is just another kind of bluff, like the flop C-bet.

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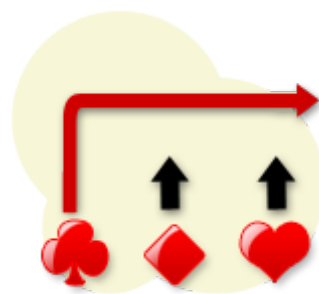
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Poker Squeeze Play

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#)

Prefer training videos? SplitSuit has made an excellent all-in-one video guide to [using the squeeze play as a bluff \(/videos/splitsuit/bluff-squeezes/\)](#) in [F.R.\(\)](#) and 6max cash games.

The "squeeze play" is an advanced (usually pre-flop) move that can be used in both [cash games \(/rooms/games/cash/\)](#) and tournaments. The squeeze play can be very effective, but has to be used with caution.



What is a squeeze play?

A squeeze play is when you notice a loose player raising from early position and another player calling this raise before you. You then make a big re-raise and take down the pot.

So basically you are taking advantage of the loose raiser and the player who thought they could get away with calling the loose raise with a weaker hand than they would normally call with.

- The loose raiser can't call because they likely raised with a weak hand.
- The caller won't call because they were calling the first raise with a weak hand.

Can you see why this play works? I'll cover why the squeeze play works in more detail a little later on.

How to make a successful squeeze play.

The implementation of the **squeeze play in poker** is determined by the *situation*, not the cards.

You have to be able to read situations well when putting the play into practice, as it can otherwise prove to be costly. Therefore it is better to be able to understand how to use the play from the start, rather than taking a trial and improvement route.

Squeeze play example.

A typical situation for a squeeze play will occur when a loose-aggressive player opens for a raise pre-flop. Another player will then call this raise and the action comes to you. At this point you make a reraise or move all-in, causing both the initial raiser and caller to fold, allowing you to take down the pot. The basic layout is:

Player A: Raises

Player B: Calls

Player C: Re-raises All-in

Players A+B: Fold

Player C: Wins

There are other players at the table, but for the purposes of this example we will assume that they all folded before or after Player A raised.

Squeeze play example hand history.

Squeeze plays in cash games and when deep-stacked in tournaments.

When making a squeeze play in a cash game or in the early stages of a tournament you will likely be deep stacked, so going all in is not an option. However, it is still possible to make successful squeeze plays if you have strong reads on your opponent.

4 times the size of the initial raise is a good rule of thumb for the size of your reraise when making a squeeze play. Just be sure to be squeezing with hands that have potential ([suited connectors](#) (</videos/splitsuit/suited-connectors/>), and stuff like that) in case your squeeze gets called.

If your post-flop game isn't up to scratch, I would advise against squeezing when playing cash games or if deep-stacked in a tournament.

Why the squeeze play works.

The effectiveness of the squeeze play stems from Player A's [table image](#) ([../..//psychology/table-image/](#)).

Player B knows that A has been raising a lot pre flop which means that it is less likely that he is holding a premium hand. Therefore B decides that he can afford to call this raise with another mediocre hand because he may well be ahead and has position on Player A.

The second player calls the initial raise because they are aware that the loose raiser is unlikely to have a great hand.

Now when the action reaches Player C, he is aware that it is unlikely that either of the players have strong [starting hands](#) ([../..//basic/starting-hand-selection/](#)), so he goes all-in forcing both Player A and B into a decision for all their chips with mediocre hands. Player A folds because he is only strong enough to raise and not call, and Player B folds because he only wanted to call the size of Player A's raise to see the flop.

Player A folds because they raised with a weak hand, and player B folds because they called with another mediocre hand under the belief that player A was weaker than them.

As you can see, the cards that Player C holds is irrelevant to the outcome of the play. The move was employed successfully because Player C was able to accurately read the situation and act upon it. Now before you start thinking "that sounds simple enough", there are a few other factors that are involved in making this play work.

Tips for using the squeeze play.

Reads on the other players.

Your reads on the players left to act behind you are just as important as your reads on the players doing the raising and calling. You have to be fairly sure that you won't run into another player acting behind you that will call your all in, otherwise you will be in a very hairy situation.

This is why it is easier to make this play when in a later [position](#) ([../..//basic/position/](#)), as there is less of a chance of bumping into another player that does hold a premium hand. So by keeping the number of players left to act behind you to a minimum, you are increasing the play's rate of success.

Table image.

Your own table image plays a very important role. If you have been involved in a number of pots and have been making a few plays, you are not in a good position to make a squeeze play in [Texas Hold'em \(/\)](#). The idea is to make your opponents think you have a big hand, forcing them to fold.

Therefore if your opponents have noticed that you have been making moves with marginal hands in the lead up to this play, it decreases the credibility of your raise and they are more likely to call. The play will have a higher rate of success if you employ it only when you have a tight table image.

The size of your re-raise.

Another important factor is the size of your re-raise. The re-raise must be large enough to be able to push both your opponents off their hand, which is why the re-raise is usually an all in.

Your re-raise is most effective as an all-in (as long as you are not deep stacked).

If you are sitting with a [short stack \(/../general/short-stack/\)](#), and the size of your all in is only going to be 2 or 3 times the size of the original raise, then it is very unlikely you are going to make either of them fold as you are giving them odds to call with most hands. As a rule of thumb you want your **all-in to be at least 5 times the size of the original raise** for this play to be effective.

One last point.

A key note to point out is that the combined total of the blinds and raises should be worth fighting for. If you are in the early stages of an MTT then there is no point in making an all-in squeeze play because you will be risking your tournament life for a very small pot.

So the size of the pot must be big enough to fight for, but small enough so that your opponents won't be priced in to call your all-in.

Poker squeeze play evaluation.

The success of a squeeze play is determined by the accuracy of your [reads on your opponents \(/../general/putting-players-on-hands/\)](#).

All you need to make the play work is; one loose raiser, one loose caller, and one strong all in. This play will be a very strong addition to your game, but it should be used sparingly to help keep its credibility intact.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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?

Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

A+ Very good article

?

Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

duh what happens when really good players slow play huge hands after the loose fool?????????

G

Greg

0 points · 8 years ago

It's going to happen a lot less often than you think.

For example, If I've got AA and a loose player raises, the last thing I want is to call (and induce a bunch of other players to call, which is naturally going to happen at a usual poker table). AA plays better 1v1, because you're not going to get it all in with an overpair in a multi-way pot on the flop and still expect to have the best hand.

So in 95% of cases, a player with a monster hand is going to raise the loose player's raise preflop. So if you see someone call a loose player's raise, you can be damn surprised if they're doing it with a monster. Because why would calling a loose raise with a monster be a good thing to do?

If they do end up showing a monster, then take it on the chin.

You can't win them all, but winning the majority with smart/fearless decisions is good enough in poker.

(Ideally you should be able to get a feel for the kind of players who think it's a good idea to call a raise from a loose player with a monster hand like AA. And if you think you're up against a player like that, think twice about squeezing them.)

A

AK

0 points · 8 years ago

Great respons

R

Robert Ö'Connell

0 points · 4 years ago

Slow playing is an excellent example of single-level thinking. Please expand on this -- very useful advice, thx!

?

Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

Lets talk strategy??

J

Just MyOpinion

0 points · 8 years ago

I would tend to squeeze with only polarized holdings as it is preferable to play potential hands (like suited connectors) with lots of customers in case you hit your draw and not in heads up. If you are in late position, I think it is more profitable to call a good price after x loose callers regarding implied odds.

Can you please explain me why this is wrong if it is ?

L

larskyhnau

0 points · 8 years ago

This article explains the basic theory behind the squeeze play. I don't think the author intend to say, that bluff squeezing is always the best line of action to take. But knowing, what makes a perfect spot, gives you the foundation for even looking at the possibility to make this play from time to time. So look at it as another tool in your toolbox. And not something, which you "must" to every single time, or which is always the best line of action to take.

This article does not cover the subject of your own hand, when you squeeze. And obviously that is very important as well. You might want to check out Splitsuits videos about 3-betting, where the topic of your own hand is covered as well as, when to do it, and when not to do it. Squeezing is really just a variant of 3-betting, the only difference being, that you are doing it against 2 or more opponents as opposed to just only 1 opponent.

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The Float Play

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#)

The "float play" is an advanced bluffing technique in Texas Holdem that is extended over two betting rounds.

The principle role of the play is to make your opponent believe you have a stronger hand than theirs via the flop and turn betting rounds, and thus closing down the action and winning the pot on the turn.

What is the float play?

The **float play** essentially involves calling an opponent's bet [on the flop \(../hand-guide/flop/\)](#) (floating the flop), and then betting after being checked to [on the turn \(../hand-guide/turn/\)](#) to win the hand before seeing the river card. It is possible to make a successful maneuver like this with any two cards, which typically makes it a good [bluffing \(../basic/bluffing/\)](#) play.

Why is the float play effective?

The play works well because it is typical for an advanced player to make a [continuation bet \(../continuation-bet/\)](#) on the flop, regardless of whether or not they caught a piece of it. Therefore it is not uncommon that our opponents will be making a bet on the flop with air, hoping that you did not catch a piece of it either and that their continued aggression will give them the pot.

The fact that you then call this bet will set alarm bells ringing in their heads, as they may fear that you could well be slowplaying a very strong hand. The majority of players will then shut down on the turn and check, which leaves us open to capitalize on their weakness by making a strong bet to win the pot.

The float play turns out to be a great defense against the continuation bet. However, it should not solely be used to try and pick off bets that you suspect are continuation bets.

How to make a successful float play.

There are two criteria however that have to be met before being able to pull off a good float play.

1. You should be acting after your opponent.
2. You should be heads-up with your opponent.

It is actually possible to make a float play out of position ([../basic/position/](#)), but this is far more difficult and it is not often recommended that you try to do so as it can become costly. In position you have the opportunity to spot any weakness on the turn from your opponent after calling their flop bet. If your opponent bets strongly again on the turn, you are able to comfortably fold knowing that they more than likely have the best hand. If they check however, you are in the perfect position to take down the pot.

A second and equally important rule for a good float play is that you should be heads-up against your opponent. If there is more than one player in the pot, it makes it more difficult to pull off such a complex bluff, as it is more likely that at least one of the players has a decent hand.

The float play works best heads-up and in position. In fact, I would rarely (if ever) attempt a float play against more than one player.

The float play relies on us trying to pick off a continuation bet from our opponents, and the addition of another player into the equation adds too many variables to make it successful, and often our attempted display of strength will go unnoticed. Therefore it is best to keep things simple, and stick to being in position against one opponent when attempting a float play.

Float play example.

Lets say we are on the button holding A♣ Q♥, and a player from middle position makes an \$8 bet in a \$1/\$2 NL Holdem game. The action folds to us and we make the call, both players in the blinds fold. The flop comes 8♠ J♥ 5♦, which does not improve our hand. Our opponent now bets \$16 into the \$19 pot.

Typically we would fold this hand as we have not connected with the flop at all, but instead we decide to make the call as we know our opponent regularly makes continuation bets with air. The turn comes the 3♣, but this time our opponent checks to us displaying some weakness.

We now bet \$40 into the \$51 pot, and our opponent folds, suspecting that we have a stronger hand than them.

Float play example hand history.

Float play example overview.

In this particular hand, our opponent may well have been making a standard continuation bet with a hand like AK, AQ, KQ, or a middle size pocket pair like 99 or 77. Our opponent was concerned about our call on the flop as it meant that we could be holding a wide range of hands that beat theirs such as AJ, KJ, JJ, 88 and so on.

Therefore our strong $\frac{3}{4}$ pot size bet on the turn means that it is too expensive for our opponent to play on, and so they give up the pot. It is important that we make a strong $\frac{3}{4}$ pot size bet, as it confirms to our opponents that we may well have a strong hand and that we are not giving them the correct [pot odds](https://www.mathematics/pot-odds/) ([../mathematics/pot-odds/](https://www.mathematics/pot-odds/)) to call to try and improve.

A strong bet on the turn is key in making our opponent think twice about playing on with their hand.

The float play can still work even if your opponent bets on the turn after you have called their bet on the flop. Some particularly aggressive players will fire a second barrel on the turn in an attempt to take down the pot with air once more.

Therefore by re-raising what you feel is a [second barrel](https://www.double-barrel/) ([../double-barrel/](https://www.double-barrel/)) or a particularly weak bet, you can still pull off a successful float play. However, the re-raise on the turn as a float play is a very dangerous and advanced move, which requires a very good understanding of your opponents. Consequently, you should be more inclined towards folding if you do not know your opponents well and they are making another bet on the turn.

Tips on making an effective float play.

- Have a good read on your opponent.
- Only use the float play when necessary.

It is central to note however that we should have a good read on our opponents to make a float play like this, as it is important to be sure that our opponent is the type of player that makes continuation bets, but will shut down and fold when they come up against any resistance. This means that float plays will work well against your typical tight-aggressive player, rather than calling stations that will call down bets regardless of what they think you might be representing. (See the article on [putting players on a hand](http://general/putting-players-on-hands/) ([../general/putting-players-on-hands/](http://general/putting-players-on-hands/)) for hand reading.)

It is also important to remember that **float plays should not be used liberally as a regular defense against the continuation bet**. It is true that this play will snap off a few continuation bets from time to time, but you will find yourself in sticky situations and getting check-raised on the turn with real hands if you overuse this particular play.

The float play is not usually something that you intend to use when you enter a pot before the flop, it is a more of a play that you can consider when faced with certain situations as they arise.

Float play spots make themselves apparent as you play; you should not go actively looking for them.

Float play evaluation.

Floating is an advanced play that usually takes place at the \$100NL Holdem games and higher, although it does not mean it does not take place at some of the lower limits. The fact that the bluff extends over two betting rounds and involves a good knowledge of your opponents style of play means that it is quite a sophisticated move, but it is a very satisfying play to use when it works well.

If you can learn to master the float play and understand situations where it can be successful, you will find that you will have a very powerful tool in your poker arsenal. However, as it has been mentioned in some top NL Holdem books, don't become too cocky after pulling off a successful float. Its just another standard play in an everyday game of poker that we can call upon from time to time.

Related articles.

- [Floating The Flop \(By Jack Wilcox\)](http://videos/wilcox/articles/floating-the-flop/) ([/videos/wilcox/articles/floating-the-flop/](http://videos/wilcox/articles/floating-the-flop/)).

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy](http://strategy/) ([/strategy/](http://strategy/)).

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? **Anonymous**

0 points · 12 years ago

Is it not better to re-raise directly on the flop if we think our opponents is in cbet??
What's the advantage of float bet vs this play??

? **Anonymous**

0 points · 12 years ago

I think that if we call, and he has a hand, we expect him to cbet again on the turn, where as if he checks the turn after we call, he is showing weakness. If he bets the turn, we fold. See, we're getting more info about his hand. Now a great player might also c/r the turn I'd think?

L **larskyhnau**

0 points · 11 years ago

The advantage is, that you get to see weakness from him, when he check the turn, before you make your move. And if that way you avoid burning up more money for no good reason, when he is actually not bluffing you but have a very strong hand, that he is trying to get value from.

And therefore it is also crucial, that you have position on your opponent, as mentioned in the article. If you don't have position, then the correct play is usually to reconsider, if you should call his preflop raise and play your hand in the first place. And most likely you should not, if you have a hand, which is so weak, that you even need to consider using the float play.

By this I mean, that if you call out of position with a very strong hand, then you will also hit strong postflop and rarely if ever find yourself in a situation, where you need to push your opponent of his hand to have a chance of winning the pot. Then instead you will be raising for value or maybe playing your hand for showdown value if the board pans out bad for that particular hand like an A high board, when you have called with KK.

M **Michael Bravo**
0 points · 7 years ago

This play is extremely useful not just as a bluff but for strong made hands, like top or middle set or top two pair. Annie Duke recommends this as a strategy and I've found it quite profitable both in cash games and near the bubble in tournaments; it is based on position and lead. It is most effective when out of position and not in the lead, so for example if you called a pre-flop raise from early to middle position. The tendency for most players who raised pre-flop is to bet when checked to (and vice versa, it is an almost biblical rule that thou shalt check to the pre-flop raiser, as probe betting is seen as weak). If you flop a strong made hand, say top or middle set, top two pair, etc., you can exploit this for value, especially on a dry board but even on textured boards. Basically, you check to the pre-flop raiser. They do their c-bet. You call. Then, you check to them again, anticipating they will bet again on the turn. Predictably they do, then you raise on the turn. This does two things. It conceals a strong hand, and two, it increases the value, because the bettor is betting against the pot, with a bigger bet on the turn and therefore an increase in value. If he folds or calls you've still increased your value. Even if he checks behind, you can then bet on the river, either gaining value from a call or raise or getting them to fold. If you play this way on a couple made hands it also increases the value of your bluffs.

G **Gabriel Chase**
0 points · 9 years ago

Jonathan Little talks about 'floating the turn'. Is there any advantage to this?

P **Philippe S**
0 points · 12 years ago

I usually make a Cbet as a semi bluff on the flop, then, if called, check raise if I connect on the turn. This as proved to be really effective. Is is a good defense against float play ?

I **Ionut Jetson**
0 points · 11 years ago

If the player has high showdown value such as Fish or Maniac you will end up -EV on the long run if you cbet. Re-raise a cbet or float only if you have enough information about your opponent stats such as how he reacts when his cbet is re-raised (call%/ fold%).

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

Whats the difference between floating a flop and peeling a flop or are they the same thing?

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Double Barrelling

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#)

Cbetting Articles: [The Continuation Bet \(.../continuation-bet/\)](#) : [More Cbetting Tips \(.../continuation-bet/tips/\)](#) : [When To CBet \(Examples\) \(.../continuation-bet/when/\)](#) : [Double Barrelling](#)

So you made a [continuation bet \(.../continuation-bet/\)](#) on the flop, but annoyingly your opponent went ahead and called it. You're now stuck in an uncomfortable situation staring in to the eyes of an unwanted turn card desperately searching for a new plan of action. What do you do?



“Double barrelling” or “firing a second barrel” is the tricky art of making another continuation bet on the turn. It's difficult to master and forces you to risk more money than your previous bet, so you really want to make sure that you make the right choice.

In this article I will outline the basics of **firing a successful second barrel on the turn.**

Firstly, “mistake 0” – poor continuation bets.

A lot of awkward situations on the turn are caused by poor continuation bets on the flop. If you don't have a [game plan \(/videos/splitsuit/preflop-planning/\)](#) on the flop and you blindly fire out a c-bet hoping for the best, what do you expect to happen from time to time?

Good continuation bet strategy is out of the scope of this particular article, but it's definitely worth building a strong flop c-betting strategy before jumping in to double barrelling strategy. Walk before you can run.

Basics of double barrelling.

1. Don't bother trying to barrel a calling station.
2. Reads are important, as ever.
3. Avoid barrelling unless you have some equity.
4. **Barrel on turn cards that scare your opponent.**
5. Don't forget to barrel when you improve on the turn too.

1) Barrelling a calling station is fun if you want to throw money at someone, but otherwise remember the principle that trying to bluff players that rarely fold will diminish your bankroll.

2) If you know that your opponent likes to float a lot of flops - that helps. If you know your opponent rarely continues past the flop without a premium hand – that helps. If you know your opponent likes to get to showdowns as frequently as possible – that helps.

Do you see a pattern forming here? The more you think and the more you know about your opponents, the easier it is to determine whether firing a second barrel is a good idea or not.

3) If you're firing a second barrel you are doing it as a bluff ([../basic/bluffing/](#)) or a semi bluff ([../semi-bluff/](#)) to try and win the pot there and then. As with any bluff, it's always a good idea to have a hand with at least some equity ([../mathematics/equity/](#)). (a hand that could still win the pot on a fortunate river card) to soften the blow when your double barrel doesn't work out.

Generally speaking, you will most likely be c-betting the flop with two overcards (eg an A♠ K♥ style hand) a lot of the time, and so you should have at least one overcard when you decide to fire that second barrel on the turn. Having just 1 overcard is the least amount of "equity" you want to be barrelling with.

Don't barrel the turn unless you have some chance of winning the hand by the river if called. The more equity you have in the hand the better. This applies to most bluffing situations in poker.

4) This is the key tip that this strategy article is going to focus upon. **If the turn card scares your opponent, it increases your chances of pushing them off their hand by firing a second barrel.** More on this in the upcoming section.

5) You also want to bet on the turn when it actually improves your hand, not just when you are carrying on with a semi-bluff from your continuation bet. You do this for balance ([../concepts/range-balancing/](#)). Your strategy becomes exploitable if you only ever fire a second barrel when you miss.

When to double barrel.

Good turn cards to double barrel.

The best kind of turn to double barrel on is when the turn is an overcard to the flop.

Flop: Q♦ 7♠ 2♣ -- Turn: K♥

Flop: J♥ 5♠ 3♦ -- Turn: A♠

Flop: T♦ 7♥ 4♣ -- Turn: Q♠

These turns are perfect to double barrel because **they hit your perceived range and are bad for your opponent's range**. In other words, our opponent is likely to have called our continuation bet with hands like top or middle pair, so the overcard on the turn makes them very uncomfortable.

These overcards could have very easily hit our range, beating the hand that they currently hold. For our opponent, calling a bet on the turn is a difficult thing to do without a premium hand after this scare card hits, as they will be much happier folding and saving their chips to your barrel.

Poor turn cards to double barrel.

Bad turn cards to barrel are the opposite to good turn cards to barrel. These are low cards or undercards to the flop, or worse, cards that pair the board.

Flop: Q♦ 7♠ 2♣ -- Turn: 5♥

Flop: J♥ 5♦ 3♦ -- Turn: 4♠

Flop: T♦ 7♥ 4♣ -- Turn: 7♠

These cards are likely to have improved or not significantly weakened the range of hands that our opponent would have called with on the flop. Our opponent may well have called with a smaller pair or drawing hand, and all of these turn cards just make all those sort of hands better.

If the turn card isn't bad (or is actually good) for our opponent, they're going to happily call yet another bet on the turn.

| In general, avoid barrelling low turn cards or cards that pair the board.

Decent turn cards to double barrel.

Decent, but not great turns to barrel are high cards that are just below the highest card on the flop.

Flop: Q♦ 6♠ 2♣ -- Turn: T♥

Flop: K♥ 5♦ 3♦ -- Turn: J♠

Flop: A♦ 9♥ 4♣ -- Turn: Q♠

These cards are still slightly scary because they make it difficult for your opponent to continue with middle or bottom pair hands that they may have called with on the flop. On the other hand, if your opponent called with top pair on the flop they may well stick around for the ride, which is why these turns are not amazing to barrel.

Firing a second barrel on these turns is not going to be quite as successful or easy to do as the “good turn cards”, which is why I would advise to only barrel these turns with a very good read.

Double barrelling evaluation.

Double barreling in a nutshell.

- Overcards to the flop are good to barrel.
 - Low cards or cards that pair the board are bad to barrel.
 - High cards that are slightly lower than the highest card on the flop can be decent for barrelling.
-

There are so many variables and reads involved with double barrelling that I’m never going to be able to cram enough information in to one article to form a 100% complete guide to it. Try and absorb as much as you can from what I’ve thrown at you here and mix it with a bit of your own initiative (maybe not too much if you’re a new player) to form your own approach to firing that second barrel.

Before you go, I just want to remind you that **even if your attempt at double barrelling fails, please do not feel compelled to shove it all in on the river.** You’re better off folding than blindly pushing all in out of frustration in a vain attempt to win your money back.

As always, practice makes perfect with the double barrel. It’s definitely one of the scariest plays to master, but you’ll get there eventually. Stick to those scary overcards for barrelling at the start and you should do just fine.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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T

titan3

0 points · 10 years ago

You have kind of ignored suits and cards that bring draws in. Obviously this is a more complicated aspect of double barreling, but imo much more useful to talk about. Overcards as scare cards is pretty clear since they trump any pair that villain had on the flop. But cards that bring straight or flush possibilities in are harder to evaluate, since it is difficult to determine whether they are scare cards at all. Would have liked to see something addressing this, but a good article overall.

L

larskyhnau

0 points · 8 years ago

Turncards, which put a new straight- or flushdraw on the table, are good to barrel on, if you have the draw yourself. But poor to barrel on, if you dont. It's the same concept as when betting on the flop really. On a wet board many drawing hands can call. And obviously this is not, what you want, when you are bluffing, be it on the flop or the turn.

L

larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

xx

?

Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

very easy to understand. and really good examples, thanks

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 8 years ago

When you bluff (as a second barrel) you are trying to tell a believable story to your opponent - how is it believable/optimal for our opponent when we barrel on an overcard to the flop, when our opponent called our c-bet on the flop - say with middle pair? I mean, wouldn't he have to understand that we only c-bet the flop as a bluff and now actually hit something on the turn? (Which I think can be kind of hard to understand for a mediocre opponent)

I hope I am kind of making sense here with what I wrote - am I wrong or could you actually see it the way I explained?

L **larskyhnau**
0 points · 8 years ago

First you should definitely also C-bet the flop with most of your strong hands. Otherwise you will be missing out on value big time. And if you C-bet most of your strong hands as well as some bluffs, your opponent obviously cannot put you on a weak hand, just because you C-bet.

Second even if your opponent think, you were bluffing when you C-bet the flop, what does it help him, if you improved on the turn to a hand, which now beat his? In the Q72 example, if he has 88-JJ, he might feel like a "hero" calling your C-bet bluff with AK or KJ.

But when the K hit the board on the turn, he is way behind to your new improved hand. So what does it help him, that he made a correct call on the flop? Now the situation has changed, and he has to make a new decision based on the new situation. And in this example, that decision is to fold.

That is not to say, that the double barrel is always a good idea, just because an overcard hit the turn. As stated in the article, you also need to look at, who your opponent is, and at your own hand.

T **That Guy**
0 points · 8 years ago

I was wondering, if in your above example of Q72 and the turn brings a Q (instead of the K or A, as above), yes we have to assume that our opponent may have a hand with a Q, but could double barreling with a Q here not also work because they must also be assuming that we could have either a QQ or AQ, KQ, etc and are slow-playing them? If you don't agree, what are the cons to the move I suggested?

T **That Guy**
0 points · 8 years ago

Another question, if our opponent re-raises our 3-bet and we don't hold AA would you recommend folding or evaluate calling depending on our opponent, the situation, etc?

And in another scenario, what happens if somebody re-raises the c-bet instead of calling?

The article didn't talk about these scenarios so I was wondering if it was assumed that we failed in our attempt and we just concede by folding? Again, depending on who our opponent is they may just have big balls to try this in the belief that we're bluffing when, in fact, they are. Wondering people's thoughts here?

A

Adam Klein

0 points · 6 years ago

The (very) mediocre players I play with will hardly fold a Q, or even JJ, because they'll think the odds I hit the K are slim, and they just have a tough time folding a high pair even if the chances are against them.

In this case - would you say the best move is to check or double barrel?

Thanks!

R

rajuyanh01

0 points · 9 years ago

Actually I think

this is among the most vital information for me. And i am glad reading your article. But want to remark on some general things, the web site style is ideal, the articles is really excellent. Thank you for sharing with us. I think it would be effective for all. Good job, cheers!

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The Stop And Go Play

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#)

The "stop and go" play is a tournament manoeuvre that takes place over the [pre-flop \(/hand-guide/preflop/\)](#) and [flop \(/hand-guide/flop/\)](#) betting rounds. The play is typically used when a player is [short-stacked \(/general/short-stack/\)](#) in a tournament and has a hand that they are willing to go all-in with in an attempt to double up.



The stop and go play is where you have a hand that you intend on moving all-in with. However, you call an opponent's bet before the flop instead of pushing, with the intention of pushing all-in on the flop instead.

The stop and go play situation.

In a situation where you are short-stacked in a tournament with a decent hand, the standard play is to push all-in if an opponent has raised in front of you.

However, if you are so short-stacked that your all-in push is not enough to make another decent full size bet on top of your opponent's raise, the chances are that they are going to have the [odds \(/mathematics/pot-odds/\)](#) to call your bet and see all five community cards to try and make the best hand. Therefore in these situations where you probably do not have enough chips to force your opponent to fold with your re-raise, you may consider making a stop and go play.

The stop and go play.

The *stop and go play* involves you calling your opponent's preflop raise with the intention of moving all in on the flop, rather than pushing all-in over the top when facing the preflop raise from your opponent.

By calling the bet on the flop, you have the opportunity to make your opponent fold on the flop by pushing the remainder of your chips in then, because your opponent will now have to call your flop bet to see two more cards instead of the opportunity to see five by calling an all-in preflop.

Your opponent will have a tougher time calling your push on the flop than they will calling a push pre-flop.

The stop and go play reduces the odds your opponent has to call, and so they will have to think hard about whether they want to continue if they haven't improved their hand, and 60% of the time they won't.

Stop and go play example.

Say we are in the middle of a tournament and we are short-stacked with 1200 chips. The blinds are 100/200 and we are holding A♣ J♥ on the big blind. Everyone folds to a player in late position ([../basic/position/](#)) who makes a standard raise to 600, and let's say that we know for a fact that they are holding a pair of Tens.

The rest of the players fold and now the action is on us. Now in this situation we could happily move all-in, but our opponent would definitely be calling our 600 re-raise and we would be facing a 50/50 all-in coin flip. Instead however, we could improve our chances of winning by making a stop and go play.

So rather than coming over the top, **we call our opponents raise** leaving us with 600 chips left in our stack. The flop comes Q♣ 6♦ 2♠ and we move all-in. Our opponent is now faced with a tough decision, as they now have to call 600 into a 1300 pot with middle pair.

Our opponent has roughly 2:1 odds to call, and we may well have made a pair of queens on the flop or be holding a higher pocket pair. Therefore if they fold, we take down a decent size pot with the worst hand, whereas we probably would have been out of the tournament if we had pushed all-in preflop.

Stop and go play example hand history.

Why the stop and go play works.

By putting our opponent's to this tough decision on the flop, we are increasing our fold equity ([../mathematics/equity/fold/](#)) and thus improving our chances of winning the hand. Even if our opponent has improved on the flop and they decide to call, it would not make a difference if we

played the hand alternately by pushing all-in preflop, as they still would have improved their hand either way.

Our fold equity increasing by pushing on the flop instead of pushing all in before the flop.

Therefore the cards that come out on the flop will have no influence on the way we play the hand, as our intention throughout the hand is to move all of our chips into the middle at some point.

A couple of tips for making the stop and go play a success.

1. Always move in if first to act, and be prepared to call if bet in to if acting after our opponent.
2. Only use the stop and go play when you are heads up.

Always move in when first to act.

If we are first to act against our opponent when making a stop and go play, we should always be moving the rest of our chips into the middle. If we check to our opponent, we are losing our fold equity in the hand. Therefore we should always bet out and put our opponent to a tough decision.

If we are acting after our opponents however, we should always be prepared to call or raise any bet they make regardless of what we are holding. This is because we are more than likely going to be pot committed, and so it would be unprofitable to fold and leave ourselves with a small stack when there is still a chance that we may win the hand and a decent sized pot.

Only use the stop and go heads up.

It should be noted that the stop and go play should only be used when we are heads up against an opponent. If there is more than one player in the pot, it will increase the chances that one of our opponents will have a good hand after the flop comes down. Therefore in any situation where you are short-stacked with a hand that you are prepared to go all in with, it is better to move all-in preflop rather than call in an attempt to make a stop and go play.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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L **larskyhnau**
0 points · 11 years ago

I agree that by using the stop-and-go play we allow our opponent to make a mistake with exactly a pocket pair, when one or more overcards come on the board. This is because he might then give us credit for having one of these overcards in which case his mathematically correct decision would be to fold, given that he would then only have two outs or about 8% chance to win the pot, and he need about 25% to justify a call. So unless he think, that we are bluffing about 2/3 of the time, or getting silly with a lower pocket pair than his, he will probably fold.

However at the same time we also give him a chance to minimize his loss from a hand, that we dominate like AJ vs AT or KQ vs. KJ, because with these hands he only have 3 outs or about 12% chance to win on a missed flop, making a fold the correct and profitable play for him, if he decides to do it.

So which play is best really depend on, how much of each hand type, we think is in our opponents range, and how he will react to the move. And since our opponent will have more dominated stuff in his range, when we have AK, than when we have AJ, the stop-and-go play is probably more beneficial, the weaker a hand, that we decide to call with. Which is not really that surprising, since it is by its whole nature a bluffing move.

Y **young**
0 points · 7 years ago

I feel as if this can translate to cash games as well. Or no?

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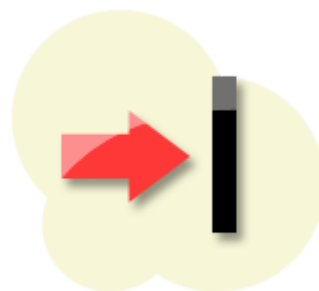
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The Blocking Bet

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

The "blocking bet" (or blocker bet) is made when you are out of position ([../basic/position/](#)) and wish to see either a showdown or a river card cheaply. If used effectively it can prevent your opponent from making a big bet that you can not profitably call.



If used incorrectly, or in the wrong circumstances, this **blocking bet** is simply a waste of chips. This article will show you how and when to use the blocking bet.

What is the blocking bet?

The blocking bet is simply where you make a smaller than average sized bet when first to act in order to reduce the amount of money that you pay to see the next card.

By making a small bet, you anticipate that your opponent will just call and not raise. As a result, you will not have to call what would have been a larger bet from them (in comparison to your "blocker bet") if you had checked.

Blocking bet overview.

We will start by explaining the basics of the blocking bet and why this move can only work when you are out of position. Next we will look at the 2 different scenarios in which the blocking bet is used – when you have a drawing hand ([../hands/drawing/](#)) during play and when you have a vulnerable made hand on the river ([../hand-guide/river/](#)). Finally a common error in using the blocking bet and the importance of disguising this play are covered.

The best way to understand the block bet is to look at what you are trying to achieve. The idea is that you see the next card – or a showdown – as cheaply as possible when you expect your opponent to make a large bet when you check. The last point is the most important, if instead your opponent would have checked behind then you are not betting to see a cheap card (for example) you are simply building the pot!

Blocking bet example.

Let's say you [limp \(/videos/splitsuit/limped-pots/\)](/videos/splitsuit/limped-pots/) behind another pre-flop limper with J♥ 10♥ and face a re-raise from the button (first limper folds). The flop comes A♥ 7♣ 2♥, giving you a flush draw. You check, and the button bets half the pot. You believe that the [effective stack sizes \(/concepts/stack-sizes/effective/\)](/concepts/stack-sizes/effective/) are deep enough to give you the correct [implied odds \(/mathematics/implied-odds/\)](/mathematics/implied-odds/) for hitting your flush, so you make the call.

Now the turn comes and the board reads A♥ 7♣ 2♥ K♠.

You expect that if you check again your opponent will bet a large enough amount that you would be unable to continue with your flush draw. As an alternative you make a small bet of 1/3rd of the pot. This is designed to prevent your opponent from making too big a bet – if he calls with his (very likely) top pair then you get to see the river card for a relatively cheap price.

Blocking bet example hand history.

The advantages of the blocking bet.

There are two advantages to the blocking bet play.

1. If you complete your draw, you expect to get paid off well.
2. It is only necessary when you are out of position.

1) If you make your flush on the river then you are very likely to be paid off by any player with a pair or better. The blocking bet stopped your opponent from betting an amount that you would not have been able to call – and also disguised your holding at the same time. If you miss the river then a check and fold is probably optimal here against most opponents.

2) If the positions had been reversed – you were on the button rather than the out of position player – then a blocking bet would not have been necessary here. Your opponent would have acted before you and could have bet enough that you were unable to call. If – after seeing his flop

bet called – the player checked on the turn you would have been in a position to check behind to try and make your flush with a [free card](#) (../free-card/).

Blocking bet advantages overview.

Blocking bets can also be used when all the cards are out. The river blocking bet is for situations where your opponent is a habitual bluffer – that is to say that a big river bet could either be a monster hand or a complete bluff. If you have a medium strength hand such as top pair with a reasonable kicker then a blocking bet can sometimes allow you to get to showdown cheaply.

The idea is to bet an amount that is large enough to prevent your opponent from bluffing, yet small enough so that those times your opponent does have a very strong holding and comes over the top you can fold only having lost a few chips. Whether to block on the river will depend on your assessment of the particular opponent, if capable of a big river bluff then a blocking bet can be a very effective weapon.

A common mistake when using the blocking bet.

The biggest single mistake players make with blocking bets in [Texas Holdem](#) (/) is to only bet a small amount when they are attempting to block. If observant opponents realize what your smaller bets mean then you will simply not be able to make this move against them. The reason is that the blocking bet can be countered easily with a raise, either as a bluff or a [semi bluff](#) (../semi-bluff/). The very nature of this move means that you will be making it with hands which can not call a big bet.

Bet a sensible amount when making a blocking bet, otherwise your opponent will be more than happy to raise and make it very difficult (and unprofitable) for you to play on.

A solution to this is to ensure that you mix in [value bets](#) (../concepts/value-betting/), where you do have a very strong holding a good proportion of the time. If those same opponents are unable to tell whether your smaller bets are blocking bets or for value then their best response becomes unclear. You have then forced them into a position where they may make a mistake – resulting in profit for you.

Blocking bet evaluation.

To summarize, the blocking bet is made when out of position against an opponent who will most probably bet if you check. It is made with hands which do not want to call a big bet – such as draws during play and medium strength hands on the river.

Betting a small amount will often confuse your opponent into calling instead of raising, allowing you to see the next card (or showdown) relatively cheaply. Ensure you mix up your blocking bets with value raises – once opponents get a read on your blocking bets they completely lose their effectiveness.

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P **Philippe S**
0 points · 12 years ago

very clever, never thought that choosing the amount yourself out of position could give you the right odds... but you shouldn't use this against too aggressive opponents

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 11 years ago

Does a blocking bet have to be that small? It seems a little obvious if the bet is less than half the pot that you are weak, opening the door for a small raise from someone wanting value or a large raise from a bluff. So could you not justify a more normal half/three-quarters pot bet due to possible fold equity (your example seems like a pretty obvious C bet from the button with all kinds of K high hands as well as with a real hand)?

G **Greg**
0 points · 11 years ago

You're right, it may well obvious. This is an older strategy that won't work as well as it used to, especially against good, thinking players.

I'd only recommend using it if you feel you can get away with it, usually against bad players that do not know how to react to it optimally.

L **larskyhnau**
0 points · 8 years ago

Yes you are right. In modern poker the more normal play in this situation is to turn your hand into a semi-bluff by betting the same size, as you would with a strong made hand like AK on this particular flop. There are two advantages of playing your hand in that way:

1. It disguises your hand even better making it easier to get paid off, when you get called and complete your draw on the turn
2. It folds out many weaker hands like in this situation KT or QJ, which still has a lot of equity against your draw, allowing you to take down many small pots uncontested without having to complete your draw

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The Free Card Play

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

The **free card** is a term used in poker for when you or your opponent are able to see the next card without having to call a bet. For example, if you and your opponent are in a pot and you are first to act, by checking you are giving your opponent the opportunity to see a "free card". There are two main reasons for using the "free card" in your game.

1. To save more money when on a draw
2. To extract more money from your opponents.

The free card is a simple and effective move that incorporates the use of the [semi-bluff \(/semi-bluff/\)](#) and the [check raise \(/check-raise/\)](#).

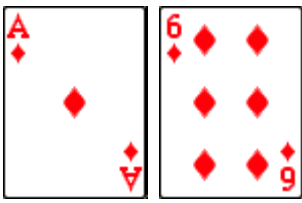
The free card play.

A free card play can be made to prevent our opponent from betting in to us on the turn, which will save us more money than if we were to call a bet on the flop and another bet on the turn to see the river.

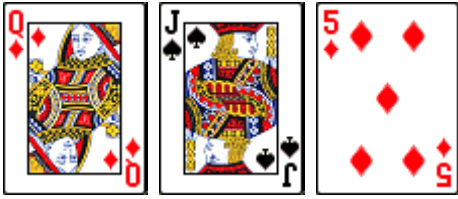
When to make a free card play.

- You should ideally be heads-up against an opponent (2 or more opponents makes it trickier).
 - You should be first to act.
 - You should have a strong drawing hand.
-

You Hold:



Flop:



In this example we have the nut flush draw, and we are heads up with our opponent. We are also first to act.

Free card plays can prove to be very successful if you hold a drawing hand (like a straight or flush draw).

This is the perfect situation in which we can make a free card play. This can be done by checking this flop when we are first to act. Now one of two things will happen:

1. Our opponent will bet.
2. Our opponent will check behind us.

The optimum play from our point of view would be for our opponent to **check**, as then we would be getting our free card on the flop. But if our opponent bets, when the action comes back to us we should re-raise.

By using the check-raise it disguises the strength of our hand and gives us a strong opportunity to take a free card on the turn if our opponent calls the re-raise. When the turn card comes, and you check once again, our opponent is less likely to bet because of our aggression on the flop. However if they re-raise once again on the flop we can be sure they have a strong hand and we should only call the bet if we are getting correct pot odds ([../mathematics/pot-odds/](http://mathematics/pot-odds/)) for the draw.

This should save us money because if we called the bet on the flop, our opponent could easily put us on a drawing hand ([../hands/drawing/](http://hands/drawing/)) and overcharge us on the next round of betting to see the next card.

Advantages of the free card play.

- It allows us to save money on future betting rounds.
- It disguises the strength of our hand.

- It gives us the opportunity to take down the pot [on the flop](#) ([../hand-guide/flop/](#)).
-

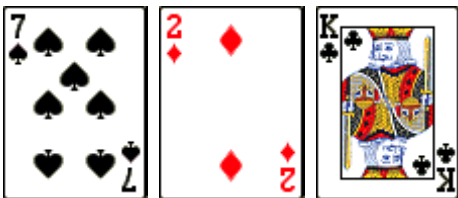
Giving a free card.

In other situations we would want to allow our opponents to have a free card. However, this would not be for the same reasons as above. Let's take the following hand as an example:

You Hold:



Flop:



Here we have a dream flop; we are currently holding the nuts and there are no [straight or flush draws](#) ([../guide/math/flush-straight/](#)). However, if you were to bet this hand it is doubtful that any opponent would call. This is because it is unlikely our opponent would have a King, and probably would not call a raise with a 7 or a 2. If we are last to act we can check and allow our opponent to see the turn for free.

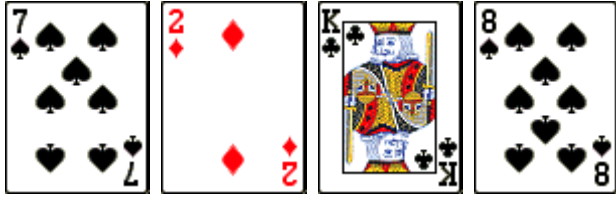
If you have the deck crippled, it is very unlikely that you are going to get any money from your opponent on the flop.

We are hoping that a card will come down to improve their hand and allow us to take money off of them on future betting rounds. In addition, by checking we are once again disguising the strength of our hand. Unlike in the previous situation where we check raised to show strength when we did not have a hand, in this situation we are trying to win extra money from the hand through deception.

Even if the next card does not help our opponent, we are now **giving them the opportunity to bluff** by showing weakness.

Now after we check, what should we do on the next betting round?

If the turn comes...



...then we should definitely bet or re-raise when last to act. We still have the nuts but we would now want to protect it from any potential flushes or straights.

Don't forget to bet the turn. The only way to build the pot is by betting or raising, so don't be afraid to bet out. If your opponent folds, it's very doubtful that you would have got any money from them on the river anyway.

In most situations you should bet on the turn ([../hand-guide/turn/](#)) to protect the hand you have. This is because it is your last opportunity to extract money from your opponent if they are on a draw and gain an extra round of bets from them if they have a half decent hand. If your opponent does fold then you have to accept that you probably would not have made much money from the hand no matter how you played it.

Deciding whether or not to give a free card.

In some spots, it is not going to be a good idea to give a free card to our opponent. Ask yourself this question when deciding whether or not to give your opponent the free card:

"Am I going to make more money from my opponent by giving them a free card, or am I going to lose more money?"

If you feel that you are giving your opponent the opportunity to catch up with you and make a better hand by giving them a free card, then you definitely should not be allowing them to see the turn for free. If there is a chance that the turn could give them the winning hand, you should be betting out and making them pay.

Don't give a free card to an opponent if that card could give them a better hand than you.

There is no room to try and get clever if your opponent has the opportunity to make a better hand than you, so leave the free card play for when your opponent is a long way behind in terms of hand strength.

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Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

I have to disagree with the example of being first to act on a flush draw. If you check-raise in this spot on the flop and get called and then check the turn, your showing more weakness than anything (unless of course you've been playing like a maniac, then they'll have no clue what's going on). I know if I'm heads up and 2nd to act on the flop and get check-raised, depending on my hand obviously, I'll call, and if it is checked to me on the turn, I'm betting 75% pot everytime in this spot. Only exception is flush draws (and that is because flush draws are the easiest draws to spot....straight draws are almost always camouflaged). If the flop had 2 diamonds and the turn brought a 3rd diamond, I will finish the hand passively and check behind for another free card (this can be extremely profitable if you have either 2-pair or a set and you catch a full house on the river, because if they made the nut flush, a full house will almost never cross their minds and they will play as if they have the nuts).

Ultimately my point is that, in my opinion, the "Free Card Play" MOSTLY only works when you are last to act. For example, if there are 3 players, Todd, Steve, and Jim, Todd is SB, Steve is BB, and Jim is the button. They all see the flop, and Todd leads out with a bet, Steve calls, Jim raises. Todd calls Jim's raise, but Steve folds. Now Todd can't really bet here because he has to assume he's going to get raised by Jim, and if Todd is hoping Jim bets, it backfires because Jim decides to take his free card by checking also.

Reverse this situation...the flop comes, Todd checks, Steve checks, Jim bets, Todd raises, Steve folds, and Jim calls Todd's raise. Now Jim has to give respect to Todd here, so if the turn misses Jim, a BET from Todd will more than likely take down the pot, and obviously if Jim hits the card he needs on the turn, a BET from Todd will leave Jim to call or raise (perks of being last to act). But Todd decides to check. No obvious draw cards came out on the turn, Todd played the flop like he wanted a big pot and slowed down on the turn. Jim almost always is going to assume that Todd did not get a turn card that he liked very much, so Jim BETS (no

free river card). If Todd calls here, then Jim will almost certainly put him on a draw, and play the river accordingly. If Todd raises again, then Jim hasn't really learned anything about "where he's at" in the hand. So now he has 2 options.....RE-RAISE Todd, in which case Todd will almost always fold, given the situation and the cards we are assuming he has.....or fold and not risk anymore money.

As you can see, in example 1, Jim uses the Free Card Play, and gets a free card. In example 2 (which, in my opinion, is a more common example in why I don't think it works) Todd does NOT get to see that free river card. The only time he does is if Jim is drawing as well in which case it'd be more Jim taking the free card (not because of Todd's play, but because Jim decided he wanted a free card for some reason). Once again, this is just my opinion, thanks for reading this novel I've been working on :-)

(did not realize it was this long haha)



Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

yea but if todd bets and jim raises and steve cold re-raises then todd and jim will put steave on a flush but todd cant call jim and steve cant call tod , jim had to beaware of todd and todd is wary of steve because steve may be bluffing todd and value betting tony, tony cant call david and jim and paul will have to fold, i know just ask jack and jill.



Anonymous

0 points · 9 years ago

Good point! I like the way you think!

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The Check Raise

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#)



The "check raise" is one of the strongest and arguably the most effective moves in [Texas Hold'em poker \(/\)](#). Regarded by some as a dishonest move and even banned in certain card rooms, there is no doubt that the *check-raise* is an important weapon in any winning player's arsenal.

A check-raise is made when you check when the action gets to you, with the intention of raising if your opponent bets, hence the name 'check-raise'.

As you can imagine it is an interesting move because at first you show weakness to your opponent by checking, and then coming over the top of them to show a great amount of strength. This is why it can be regarded as dishonest as it is such a deceptive play, 'trapping' your opponent's bet into the pot.

So why should you use the check raise?

The check raise is useful in both [bluffing \(.../basic/bluffing/\)](#), your opponents out of pots and getting more money into the pot when you have a good hand. The check-raise also brings a dynamic element to your game by making you become more unpredictable to your opponents.

It is rare to find an amateur player using this move in a poker game, so if your opponents see you using this move they can be fairly sure you know how to play good poker, and may think twice about bluffing you out of future pots. Below are the two areas that describe how the check-raise can be used for bluffing, and getting more money into the pot with a strong hand.

Check raise example.

Check raise example hand history.

Check-raising as a bluff and semi-bluff.

The **check raise is arguably the strongest move in poker**, and so for this reason it is exceptionally useful when trying to pull off a bluff. This move is most effective against one opponent and becomes less successful as you increase the number of opponents, which could really be said for any type of bluff. 3 criteria should be met in order to make a good check raise:

To pull off a check-raise you have to be in first position ([../basic/position/](#)) for the obvious reason that you have to be checking into your opponent to make them bet. If your opponent does indeed bet, then if you raise your opponent you are showing such a high amount of strength that your opponent will fold any marginal hands.

A check raise will only work when you are first to act, otherwise you will simply be raising (if you are last to act).

There are certain criteria you should follow in order for this to be successful.

- You should be confident that your opponent holds a marginal hand.
- You should re-raise at least twice the amount of your opponent's bet.
- The pot should be relatively small.
- It is advisable to have some sort of drawing hand ([../hands/drawing/](#)) or marginal hand.

Be confident that your opponent has a hand they can fold.

Firstly, if you believe that your opponent holds a monster, there is little to no chance that a check-raise will get them off the hand. If you know that your opponent regularly bets after a person checks to him with no hand or with small to middle pairs, there is a far greater chance that a check-raise in this situation will work.

Make a strong raise.

Secondly, the re-raise made by you should be at least twice your opponent's bet. For example if your opponent bets \$5 into a \$10 pot, you should bet \$15, re-raising another \$10. This is because **a minimum re-raise is likely to have little effect on your opponent**, because they will only have to call a small amount relative to the size of the pot in order to see the next card. However, if you are re-raising them at least twice the amount they bet, it will make them think a little bit harder about whether they want to pay as much to see the next card.

Aim to make re raises at least twice the size of your opponent's bet. You do not want to give them good odds to call by minimum raising.

Check raises tend to be more effective in small pots.

Thirdly, you are more likely to pull off a bluff when the pot is small. This will be because **the amount your opponent must call to see the next card will be larger relative to the size of the pot, giving them the wrong pot odds (../mathematics/pot-odds/) or to call** to make a second pair or to make their draw. Therefore a check-raise will be more effective on the first actual round of betting, such as on the flop in Hold'em. If there is no betting on the flop then a check-raise will still be as effective on the turn because the pot has remained the same size, because there will have been no betting since the [pre-flop betting round \(\[../hand-guide/preflop/\]\(http://../hand-guide/preflop/\)\)](http://../hand-guide/preflop/).

Finally, you will save yourself more money in the long run if you hold a drawing hand, due to the fact that your opponent will occasionally call your re-raise. If you have no hand, you will have to check and give up your hand to any bets on future rounds, losing the full amount of money you used in the actual raise.

However, if you have a good draw when your opponent calls, you stand a chance of taking the whole pot when you make your draw. In addition to this, you are likely to get a [free card \(\[../free-card/\]\(http://../free-card/\)\)](http://../free-card/) after after-check raising [on the flop \(\[../hand-guide/flop/\]\(http://../hand-guide/flop/\)\)](http://../hand-guide/flop/), because your opponent will be afraid to bet into you on future rounds. Giving you extra opportunities to make your draw.

Check raising for extra money.

If you hit a monster hand in poker, your main [objective \(\[../videos/wilcox/articles/the-real-objective-of-poker/\]\(http://../videos/wilcox/articles/the-real-objective-of-poker/\)\)](http://../videos/wilcox/articles/the-real-objective-of-poker/) is to get as much money from your opponents as possible, and this is where a check-raise comes in handy. Unlike in the situation mentioned above, you want to use the check raise a little more passively to avoid scaring your opponents out of the hand. As with using this move to bluff opponents, there is another set of criteria that will make this play successful when followed correctly.

- The check-raise for extra money is more effective against multiple opponents.
- Be sure to be in first or early position.
- Do not check-raise too much.

It is advisable to check raise for extra money when there is more than one opponent in the pot, otherwise the move will do what is mentioned in the first part of the article, showing too much strength and making your opponent fold his marginal hand.

In the majority of situations, you are better off betting straight out as opposed to going for the check raise. However, it is a handy play to have in your arsenal in the right spots.

It is better to attempt a check raise when you are in one of the earliest positions in the hand, because if you are one of the last few to act, then you cannot be sure that any of the players behind you will bet to give you the opportunity to raise.

Although you want to extract as much money from your opponents as possible, a large re-raise may scare them all out of the hand. By minimum raising you are giving your opponents a greater incentive to put more money into the pot, because it is not costing them as much to see the next card.

Be sure when you do check-raise to extract extra money from your opponents, that your hand is virtually unbeatable. You do not want to be making minimum re-raise if the board is coordinated enough that your opponents hold hands that could possibly out-draw you.

Check raise evaluation.

When used correctly, the check-raise can be used to your advantage when you do not hold a strong hand, and when you hold a very strong hand. It is well worth your time and effort learning the principles put forward in this article, as it will prove to be of a tremendous value to your poker game.

This article covers the basics that you should know to help you understand how to effectively use this move. Be careful not to over-use this move, as it will lose its credibility the more you use it against the same opponent. The check-raise also requires a certain amount of knowledge about your opponent, which cannot be thoroughly taught through articles. So get out there and practice!

Related articles.

- [Check-Raising As A Bluff \(/videos/wilcox/articles/check-raising-as-a-bluff/\)](/videos/wilcox/articles/check-raising-as-a-bluff/)
- [Semi-Bluffing By Raising All In \(/videos/wilcox/articles/semi-bluffing-by-raising-all-in/\)](/videos/wilcox/articles/semi-bluffing-by-raising-all-in/)

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I **Ionut Jetson**
0 points · 11 years ago

I always use it against people who is trying to bluff me or against weak tight or rock players. Do not try to execute such manoeuvre against players with high showdown stats unless you are ahead in the hand.

G **Greg**
0 points · 11 years ago

Good plan Ionut, you're doing it right.

Should always have a damn good reason to check-raise. Never check-raise for the sake of it.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 13 years ago

Great notes here. I agree the key is that strong raise. You gotta make it look like you have a big one that you are willing to push with early in the hand. Establish you strength (or crazziness) and make him fear you. That's the road to success. Later -RVB-

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 8 years ago

Nice article, however I see a problem with check-raising different amounts in different situations (bluffing vs. value-inflating the pot) - aware opponents can easily pick up on that - especially in online poker, where you see the numbers that are raised in front of you.

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Double Barrelling

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#)

Cbetting Articles: [The Continuation Bet \(.../continuation-bet/\)](#) : [More Cbetting Tips \(.../continuation-bet/tips/\)](#) : [When To CBet \(Examples\) \(.../continuation-bet/when/\)](#) : [Double Barrelling](#)

So you made a [continuation bet \(.../continuation-bet/\)](#) on the flop, but annoyingly your opponent went ahead and called it. You're now stuck in an uncomfortable situation staring in to the eyes of an unwanted turn card desperately searching for a new plan of action. What do you do?



“Double barrelling” or “firing a second barrel” is the tricky art of making another continuation bet on the turn. It's difficult to master and forces you to risk more money than your previous bet, so you really want to make sure that you make the right choice.

In this article I will outline the basics of **firing a successful second barrel on the turn.**

Firstly, “mistake 0” – poor continuation bets.

A lot of awkward situations on the turn are caused by poor continuation bets on the flop. If you don't have a [game plan \(/videos/splitsuit/preflop-planning/\)](#) on the flop and you blindly fire out a c-bet hoping for the best, what do you expect to happen from time to time?

Good continuation bet strategy is out of the scope of this particular article, but it's definitely worth building a strong flop c-betting strategy before jumping in to double barrelling strategy. Walk before you can run.

Basics of double barrelling.

1. Don't bother trying to barrel a calling station.
2. Reads are important, as ever.
3. Avoid barrelling unless you have some equity.
4. **Barrel on turn cards that scare your opponent.**
5. Don't forget to barrel when you improve on the turn too.

1) Barrelling a calling station is fun if you want to throw money at someone, but otherwise remember the principle that trying to bluff players that rarely fold will diminish your bankroll.

2) If you know that your opponent likes to float a lot of flops - that helps. If you know your opponent rarely continues past the flop without a premium hand – that helps. If you know your opponent likes to get to showdowns as frequently as possible – that helps.

Do you see a pattern forming here? The more you think and the more you know about your opponents, the easier it is to determine whether firing a second barrel is a good idea or not.

3) If you're firing a second barrel you are doing it as a bluff ([../basic/bluffing/](#)) or a semi bluff ([../semi-bluff/](#)) to try and win the pot there and then. As with any bluff, it's always a good idea to have a hand with at least some equity ([../mathematics/equity/](#)). (a hand that could still win the pot on a fortunate river card) to soften the blow when your double barrel doesn't work out.

Generally speaking, you will most likely be c-betting the flop with two overcards (eg an A♠ K♥ style hand) a lot of the time, and so you should have at least one overcard when you decide to fire that second barrel on the turn. Having just 1 overcard is the least amount of "equity" you want to be barrelling with.

Don't barrel the turn unless you have some chance of winning the hand by the river if called. The more equity you have in the hand the better. This applies to most bluffing situations in poker.

4) This is the key tip that this strategy article is going to focus upon. **If the turn card scares your opponent, it increases your chances of pushing them off their hand by firing a second barrel.** More on this in the upcoming section.

5) You also want to bet on the turn when it actually improves your hand, not just when you are carrying on with a semi-bluff from your continuation bet. You do this for balance ([../concepts/range-balancing/](#)). Your strategy becomes exploitable if you only ever fire a second barrel when you miss.

When to double barrel.

Good turn cards to double barrel.

The best kind of turn to double barrel on is when the turn is an overcard to the flop.

Flop: Q♦ 7♠ 2♣ -- Turn: K♥

Flop: J♥ 5♠ 3♦ -- Turn: A♠

Flop: T♦ 7♥ 4♣ -- Turn: Q♠

These turns are perfect to double barrel because **they hit your perceived range and are bad for your opponent's range**. In other words, our opponent is likely to have called our continuation bet with hands like top or middle pair, so the overcard on the turn makes them very uncomfortable.

These overcards could have very easily hit our range, beating the hand that they currently hold. For our opponent, calling a bet on the turn is a difficult thing to do without a premium hand after this scare card hits, as they will be much happier folding and saving their chips to your barrel.

Poor turn cards to double barrel.

Bad turn cards to barrel are the opposite to good turn cards to barrel. These are low cards or undercards to the flop, or worse, cards that pair the board.

Flop: Q♦ 7♠ 2♣ -- Turn: 5♥

Flop: J♥ 5♦ 3♦ -- Turn: 4♠

Flop: T♦ 7♥ 4♣ -- Turn: 7♠

These cards are likely to have improved or not significantly weakened the range of hands that our opponent would have called with on the flop. Our opponent may well have called with a smaller pair or drawing hand, and all of these turn cards just make all those sort of hands better.

If the turn card isn't bad (or is actually good) for our opponent, they're going to happily call yet another bet on the turn.

| In general, avoid barrelling low turn cards or cards that pair the board.

Decent turn cards to double barrel.

Decent, but not great turns to barrel are high cards that are just below the highest card on the flop.

Flop: Q♦ 6♠ 2♣ -- Turn: T♥

Flop: K♥ 5♦ 3♦ -- Turn: J♠

Flop: A♦ 9♥ 4♣ -- Turn: Q♠

These cards are still slightly scary because they make it difficult for your opponent to continue with middle or bottom pair hands that they may have called with on the flop. On the other hand, if your opponent called with top pair on the flop they may well stick around for the ride, which is why these turns are not amazing to barrel.

Firing a second barrel on these turns is not going to be quite as successful or easy to do as the “good turn cards”, which is why I would advise to only barrel these turns with a very good read.

Double barrelling evaluation.

Double barreling in a nutshell.

- Overcards to the flop are good to barrel.
 - Low cards or cards that pair the board are bad to barrel.
 - High cards that are slightly lower than the highest card on the flop can be decent for barrelling.
-

There are so many variables and reads involved with double barrelling that I’m never going to be able to cram enough information in to one article to form a 100% complete guide to it. Try and absorb as much as you can from what I’ve thrown at you here and mix it with a bit of your own initiative (maybe not too much if you’re a new player) to form your own approach to firing that second barrel.

Before you go, I just want to remind you that **even if your attempt at double barrelling fails, please do not feel compelled to shove it all in on the river.** You’re better off folding than blindly pushing all in out of frustration in a vain attempt to win your money back.

As always, practice makes perfect with the double barrel. It’s definitely one of the scariest plays to master, but you’ll get there eventually. Stick to those scary overcards for barrelling at the start and you should do just fine.

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T

titan3

0 points · 10 years ago

You have kind of ignored suits and cards that bring draws in. Obviously this is a more complicated aspect of double barreling, but imo much more useful to talk about. Overcards as scare cards is pretty clear since they trump any pair that villain had on the flop. But cards that bring straight or flush possibilities in are harder to evaluate, since it is difficult to determine whether they are scare cards at all. Would have liked to see something addressing this, but a good article overall.

L

larskyhnau

0 points · 8 years ago

Turncards, which put a new straight- or flushdraw on the table, are good to barrel on, if you have the draw yourself. But poor to barrel on, if you dont. It's the same concept as when betting on the flop really. On a wet board many drawing hands can call. And obviously this is not, what you want, when you are bluffing, be it on the flop or the turn.

L

larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

xx

?

Anonymous

0 points · 8 years ago

When you bluff (as a second barrel) you are trying to tell a believable story to your opponent - how is it believable/optimal for our opponent when we barrel on an overcard to the flop, when our opponent called our c-bet on the flop - say with middle pair? I mean, wouldn't he have to understand that we only c-bet the flop as a bluff and now actually hit something on the turn? (Which I think can be kind of hard to understand for a mediocre opponent)

I hope I am kind of making sense here with what I wrote - am I wrong or could you actually see it the way I explained?

L

larskyhnau

0 points · 8 years ago

First you should definitely also C-bet the flop with most of your strong hands. Otherwise you will be missing out on value big time. And if you C-bet most of your strong hands as well as some bluffs, your opponent obviously cannot put you on a weak hand, just because you C-bet.

Second even if your opponent think, you were bluffing when you C-bet the flop, what does it help him, if you improved on the turn to a hand, which now beat his? In the Q72 example, if he has 88-JJ, he might feel like a “hero” calling your C-bet bluff with AK or KJ.

But when the K hit the board on the turn, he is way behind to your new improved hand. So what does it help him, that he made a correct call on the flop? Now the situation has changed, and he has to make a new decision based on the new situation. And in this example, that decision is to fold.

That is not to say, that the double barrel is always a good idea, just because an overcard hit the turn. As stated in the article, you also need to look at, who your opponent is, and at your own hand.

T

That Guy

0 points · 8 years ago

Another question, if our opponent re-raises our 3-bet and we don't hold AA would you recommend folding or evaluate calling depending on our opponent, the situation, etc?

And in another scenario, what happens if somebody re-raises the c-bet instead of calling?

The article didn't talk about these scenarios so I was wondering if it was assumed that we failed in our attempt and we just concede by folding? Again, depending on who our opponent is they may just have big balls to try this in the belief that we're bluffing when, in fact, they are. Wondering people's thoughts here?

T

That Guy

0 points · 8 years ago

I was wondering, if in your above example of Q72 and the turn brings a Q (instead of the K or A, as above), yes we have to assume that our opponent may have a hand with a Q, but could double barreling with a Q here not also work because they must also be assuming that we could have either a QQ or AQ, KQ, etc and are slow-playing them? If you don't agree, what are the cons to the move I suggested?

A

Adam Klein

0 points · 6 years ago

The (very) mediocre players I play with will hardly fold a Q, or even JJ, because they'll think the odds I hit the K are slim, and they just have a tough time folding a high pair even if the chances are against them.

In this case - would you say the best move is to check or double barrel?

Thanks!

?

Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

very easy to understand. and really good examples, thanks

R

rajuyanh01

0 points · 9 years ago

Actually I think

this is among the most vital information for me. And i am glad reading your article. But want to remark on some general things, the web site style is ideal, the articles is really excellent. Thank you for sharing with us. I think it would be effective for all. Good job, cheers!

Sticking to Poker Basics (<http://www.oddsandpots.com/basics-of-poker/>).

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When To Continuation Bet - Examples

Cbetting Articles: [The Continuation Bet \(../\)](#) : [More Cbetting Tips \(../tips/\)](#) : [When To CBet \(Examples\)](#) : [Double Barrelling \(../../double-barrel/\)](#)

SplitSuit's [C-Betting Like A Champion \(/videos/splitsuit/cbetting/\)](#) concept video is all about how to cbet more effectively. Worth a watch if you're struggling with your cbet frequencies.

In my very first article on [continuation betting \(../\)](#) (cbetting, cbets) I went over the basics of performing cbets in NL Hold'em. In this article I am going to **explain how and why certain flop textures are good or bad for cbetting.**

This will be more of an example orientated guide, which I'm sure many of you will appreciate more than just the theory.

As I write these examples I'm assuming that we are **heads up**, have **missed the flop** (i.e not made a pair, a strong draw or better) and would like to see our opponent fold their hand. We are betting as a [bluff \(../../basic/bluffing/\)](#) rather than for [value \(../../concepts/value-betting/\)](#).



Flop textures for cbetting.

Starting with the best type of flops (flop textures) for cbetting and working my way down, I will explain why each is good, okay or bad for cbet bluffing.

Ace high or King high dry flops.



- Great for cbetting.
- Cbet ~90% of the time.

These are perfect for cbetting because unless your opponent has at the very least 2nd pair they are unlikely to continue with their hand. In fact, a lot of tighter players will fold 2nd pair hands to a cbet [QOP](#)(), so I pretty much cbet these flops every single time.

The only downside to these flops is that if you hold a hand like [KQ](#) ([/videos/splitsuit/inverse-5/](#)) on the A83 flop and get called it's not looking good for the rest of the hand. Nonetheless, it still remains [+EV](#) ([../../mathematics/expected-value/](#)) to cbet this close to 90% of the time.

Two high, one low.



- Great for cbetting.
- Cbet ~80% of the time.

These flops are also good for cbetting for the same reason as the A/K high dry flops. **These flops hit your perceived [range](#) ([../../concepts/rem/range/](#)) hard and make it difficult for your opponent to call a cbet with less than 2nd pair.** Remember that a hand only improves to 1 pair or better on the flop 1/3 of the time, so your opponent will be giving up the pot more often than they peel.

You can try and argue that if your opponent calls your preflop raise, this flop hits their range as well. This is true for the very tight players, but there are so many lower pocket pairs, [suited connectors](#) ([/videos/splitsuit/suited-connectors/](#)) and hands that just flat out miss this flop that it's still profitable to cbet here a large % of the time.

Just as it is with spiders, your opponents are more afraid of you than you are of them.

One high, two low.



- Good for cbetting.
- Cbet ~60% of the time.

This is pretty much the last of the “good” flops to cbet. Same reasons as before really; this flop could have easily hit your range and if you have 2 overcards like AK or KQ it’s really not the end of the world if you get called.

On these flops you tend to get peeled/floated (../../float/), more often, which is why I like to have some decent equity in the hand with overcards to cbet this one. If I don’t have a decent draw or overcards, I generally avoid cbetting.

Low or wet flops.



- Poor for cbetting.
- Cbet ~25% of the time.

These flops hit your opponent’s preflop calling range hard. Therefore you can expect to see a lot of calls from speculative hands and/or check raises (../../check-raise/), from strong draws if you attempt to cbet bluff.

There’s no need to worry about cbet bluffing low flops or any flops that are really coordinated too frequently. You may be better off taking a free card and keeping the pot size as low as possible by checking in position and just hoping for the best when checking out of position.

If you do decide to cbet these flops, be prepared to fire a second barrel (../../double-barrel/) (and maybe even a third).

Broadway flops.



- Bad for cbetting.
- Cbet ~0% of the time.

If you're thinking about cbet bluffing this flop the chances are that you are holding a lower pocket pair or undercards, where both of which have a very bleak outlook if you get called and therefore have very little [equity](#) in the hand.

I don't believe that you are getting enough folds in this situation to cbet here to make it profitable, so I would definitely advise against it on these sorts of flops. I cbet bluff these flops close to 0% of the time.

When to cbet evaluation.

This isn't the ultimate guide to cbet bluffing any and every flop imaginable in [Texas Hold'em](#). Sorry. The cbetting percentages I've thrown out are really rough estimates as well.

However, these examples should give you an insight to the type of flops I like cbetting and the type of flops I wouldn't touch with a barge pole after missing the flop. Almost every cbet situation is unique depending on the player(s) you are up against and the cards on the flop. Treat this as a rough foundation.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy](#).

Comments

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? **Anonymous**
0 points · 13 years ago

really great article, my cbets have been pretty random hopefully this will help my game. What do you think about cbetting paired boards? for instance j1010 or a board like kk6 both rainbows

L **larskyhnau**
0 points · 11 years ago

I think a KK6 board is fairly similar to a A high or K high board and therefore excellent to C-bet. You will get a bit less credit for having a K than you would on a K high board, because there is only 2 K's left in the deck rather than 3, so you might get called a bit more by all pocket pairs from 77 to QQ and maybe even by 22-55, which is obviously bad, if you want to generate folds.

But on the other hand, all your opponents range of Broadway hands will have missed a paired flop an enormously large percentage of the time, since there are only 5 cards in the deck (2 K's and 3 6's), which will have hit a pair or better as opposed to 9 on an unpaired board, and since there are absolutely no draws on board, not even a gutshot straightdraw.

And also if your opponent does decide to call with a missed Broadway hand, or even a 6, he will know, that if you actually HAVE the K, you are representing by raising, then he is drawing almost dead even with an A overcard. So that might be an excellent situation to fire out a second barrel on the turn.

But another question is, why you want to C-bet this in the first place? You mention 1010, and why would you C-bet 1010 on a KK6 board? Do you expect any better hands to fold? Better hands are only 66 and KX, which obviously will never fold, and JJ, QQ and AA, which I also don't think will fold to a single barrel very often.

Do you expect worse hands to continue and pay you off? Well if your opponent is the kind of player, who will call on a KK6 board with almost anything from 22-55 and 77-99 to AQ, AJ or even 98 suited, then you can obviously C-bet for value with 1010 with the intention of checking back or check-calling most turns and rivers.

But value betting is outside the scope of this article. And depending on how your opponent plays, it might be better to check and try to induce a bluff or light value bet from him, which you can then snap up, than going for the bet yourself, when you have a relatively marginal hand like 2. pair.

In my opinion the main advantage of C-betting here is to deprive our opponent of his equity share, if he has overcards to our pair other than the K, i.e. J, Q or A. That is certainly a valid reason for raising, but it's up for debate, if this free equity is enough to compensate for the extra money, you lose, when he calls you with a K or with a better pocket pair (JJ, QQ or AA).

Having 2. pair is a really tough spot to play, because you could be behind as well as ahead, so there is no automatic "rules" for how to play it. You really have to feel it out and use all the reads, you have on your opponent.



Anonymous

0 points · 9 years ago

This all depends on the opponents preflop calling range.

On 843 2 tone:

A nitty player who calls preflop with 13% of hands would hit this with a gutshot or better 57%

A looser player who calls preflop with 22% would hit this with a gutshot or better 41%



larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

After reading this again and having experimented with C-betting different board textured in my own game, I am not sure, I agree, that low flops are bad to C-bet. Or that 2 high 1 low boards are very good to C-bet.

In the article, it is stated, that low wet flops "hit your opponents preflop calling range hard". But that is not really true in my opinion. If we give ourself AQ offsuit and assume, that our opponent 3-bet with QQ+ and AK and cold-call with 10% of his remaining hands, then we only have about 39% equity against his range on the KJ4 rainbow flop. But we have about 47-50% equity against his range on the low and wet 843 flop, depending on whether we have potential for making a 4-flush or not.

And while having equity against our opponents entire range isn't the only thing, we should look at when betting as a bluff, it would seem very odd to C-bet, when we have 39% equity but not, when we have 47-50% equity.

Our own hand matters a lot on the low board though. Even if we just change our hand from AQ to KQ, then our equity on the low 843 board drops tremendously to 27-31% against the 10% cold calling range. So one could probably make a case for C-betting only pocket pairs, AK and AQ on low boards and check-fold or check behind with everything else.



Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

Didn't find what i was looking for here. Everywhere there are silly "ranges" like 90% hurr durr, fuck that, what 90% would you cbet there? Like 90% of the crap, 90% of your whole range?



Greg

0 points · 10 years ago

Yeah these are rough guides. But yes against a player who doesn't float a lot I can see betting the majority of your hands on a board like that being +EV.



Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

This article is a mess. Dind't even bother to read it, beacause it looks so chaotic.

G

Greg

0 points · 10 years ago

Sorry Jorma. What could I do to help tidy it up?

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Continuation Betting Tips

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Still need some help with your cbetting game? Don't worry, you'll get there eventually with practice.

In the meantime, here are a handful of tips to help you develop a well-rounded continuation bet strategy.



1) Rule of thumb: Wet is bad, dry is good.

When making a continuation bet bluff when you haven't connected with the flop, as a **very general rule of thumb, dry flops are better for continuation betting than wet ones.**

As a quick reminder, **dry flops are uncoordinated** whereas **wet flops are highly coordinated** with potential for a lot of drawing hands. See the [continuation betting examples \(.../when/\)](#) for a more in-depth discussion.

This rule isn't going to apply to every flop imaginable, but it's a good place to start if you come up against an unfamiliar flop and have no idea whether or not a continuation bet would be appropriate.

2) You can bet slightly less on dry flops.

On very dry flops, it may well be the case that a 2/3 or even ½ pot size bet will do the exact same job a ¾ pot size bet will.

For example, let's say you hold AQ on a K72 flop and you decide to make a cbet. On this sort of flop your opponent is unlikely to continue with their hand unless they have a K, 7 or decent pocket pair. There are no draw possibilities, so your opponent will just as happily fold to a \$5 bet in to a \$10 pot as they would to an \$8 bet in to a \$10 pot.

Conversely, let's say you hold AK on a flop of Q87. A lot more hands like 56, 9T, 96 and 9J will be more inclined to call a $\frac{1}{2}$ pot size bet as opposed to a $\frac{3}{4}$ pot size bet. Therefore a \$5 bet in to a \$10 pot will be less effective than a slightly larger \$8 bet in to a \$10 pot. It's a small difference, but it definitely has an effect.

It's better to bet a slightly smaller amount if you are confident that it will have the same effect as a larger bet due to the fact that you are risking less money for the same outcome. Don't go out of your way to bet minimally at every opportunity, but just be aware of the option in certain situations.

3) It's nice to have some equity when cbet bluffing, but it's not essential.

As with any bluff the more [equity](#) ([../../mathematics/equity/](#)), we have the better. This basically means that when cbet bluffing it's better to hold a hand that could still potentially win the pot if we get called on the flop.

For example, it's better to have A♠ Q♥ on a flop of K♦ 7♣ 2♥ than it is to have K♠ Q♥ on a flop of A♦ 7♣ 2♥.

This is because with the A♠ Q♥ hand **we have an overcard that can give us a higher pair on the turn or river if called**, whereas if our opponent already has top pair on a flop of A♦ 7♣ 2♥ there is very little a hand like K♠ Q♥ can do to improve.

In spite of this, whilst it's nice to have equity it's not essential for making cbet bluffs. There will be a lot of times where you can make a cbet bluff with very little equity and it will still be [+EV](#) ([../../mathematics/expected-value/](#)). Nonetheless, there's no denying it makes you feel warmer inside to have at least some equity just in case though.

4) The reason we cbet so much is for balance.

Many winning players will tell you that they will cbet almost every flop they see. **So when you are advised to cbet around 70% of flops you are doing this for balance.**

See the article on [balancing your range \(https://pnl.com/concepts/range-balancing/\)](https://pnl.com/concepts/range-balancing/) for more information. It's an interesting read.

If you cbet this frequently **you cannot expect to make your opponent fold every time you miss and have them call every time you hit** it just doesn't work like that. However, because you are betting with almost your entire [range of hands \(https://pnl.com/concepts/rem/range/\)](https://pnl.com/concepts/rem/range/) when you see the flop it makes it near-impossible for your opponent to know what you hold when you cbet.

Therefore, this lack of information for your opponent allows them to make more mistakes than if we were to cbet 90% of the time when we hit and 20% of the time when we miss. If we cbet almost all of our hands our cbetting is balanced and we stand to make a profit from this.

In a nutshell, cbetting such a large % of our hands makes us difficult to read and makes us money over the long run.

5) Don't be put off when your opponent calls a cbet bluff.

Following on from the last point, do not get disheartened when your opponent ends up calling one of your cbet bluffs. If we are cbetting such a high percentage of the time we should expect to occasionally get looked up when we do not want to.

Far too many players have one negative experience from a certain play and convince themselves that it's not profitable to continue making that play. However, with cbetting you have to put your faith in the less-than-obvious fact that **you are actually making more money over the long run**, even if you expect to lose a little in some hands from time to time. It's the same principle as the one used in [pot odds \(https://pnl.com/mathematics/pot-odds/\)](https://pnl.com/mathematics/pot-odds/).

We stand to win more money from the times our opponent makes an incorrect call or fold than we expect to lose from the times our opponent makes a correct call due to the fact that we are cbetting so much - try reading that over again until it sinks in. It's hard to grasp at first but you'll get there.

Furthermore, just because we get called it doesn't mean that it's end of sports. We may well still have an opportunity to win the hand through potentially [firing a second barrel \(https://pnl.com/double-barrel/\)](https://pnl.com/double-barrel/) or actually improving on the turn or river.

Things get easier when you understand why you are cbetting and already have a [plan of action \(https://pnl.com/videos/splitsuit/preflop-planning/\)](https://pnl.com/videos/splitsuit/preflop-planning/) for when/if your cbet gets called.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy_\(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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? Anonymous
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This part was cool, it didnt try too much +1 Nice thoughts and analysis about basics

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Poker Continuation Bet

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#)

Cbetting Articles: The Continuation Bet : [More Cbetting Tips \(tips/\)](#) : [When To CBet \(Examples\) \(when/\)](#) : [Double Barrelling \(.../double-barrel/\)](#)

The "continuation bet" (or cbet) is becoming an increasingly popular move at the no limit Holdem tables. The popularity of the move stems from its simplicity and effectiveness, which means that it is easy to learn and be used appropriately on a basic level by players new to the game.



It is hard to play any session at any level without seeing a **continuation bet** being utilized, and you are putting yourself at a great disadvantage if you are not aware of it.

What is a continuation bet?

A continuation bet is simply a bet that is made on the flop if you were the pre-flop raiser, even if you did not improve your hand on the flop.

So if you raised pre-flop with A♠ K♥ and the flop came 4♦ 9♣ Q♥, you can give yourself a chance of winning the pot by making a bet, despite the fact you have not made a pair or better.

This play is often successful because of the fact that **2 times out of 3 your opponent will not make a pair on the flop.**

This means that if your opponent folded their hand each time you made a continuation bet and they did not connect with the flop, you will be winning more pots on the flop than if you simply checked. This is the most basic principle behind the play, but there are numerous other factors that influence its' success.

How to make a good continuation bet.

- A good continuation bet is $2/3$ to $3/4$ the size of the pot.
- Take in to consideration reads on your opponents.

Continuation bet sizing.

A good size of a continuation bet should be around $2/3$ to $3/4$ the size of the pot. So if the pot were \$10, a \$7 bet would be an appropriate amount for a respectable continuation bet. If the bet is too low, it invites opponents to call because they have good pot odds (<http://mathematics/pot-odds/>), if they are on a draw or if they have a half decent hand.

| A good continuation bet is between $2/3$ to $3/4$ of the size of the pot.

When we make this play we want to make it appear as if we have a very strong hand like top pair or better scaring our opponents out of the pot, and betting between $2/3$ to $3/4$ the size of the pot does this very effectively. However, if we over bet the pot (for example \$14 into a \$10 pot), we are **investing too much money into the hand and risking more than we need to when a smaller \$8 bet will have the same effect.**

Take in to consideration reads on your opponents.

The strength of your opponent's ability should influence your decision on whether or not a continuation bet should be made. At the lowest levels you will find that opponents are more willing to call bets with any sort of hand.

| Avoid making continuation bets against calling stations.

The reduced likelihood of opponents folding at the lower levels means that it may not be profitable to make continuation bets because we are unable to scare off the mediocre hands that they will hold. In addition, the effectiveness of a continuation bet decreases against more experienced opponents because the very good players are able to sense these type of plays and may raise or call knowing that you may be betting with the worst hand.

This means that we should reduce the number of continuation bets we make, as they will be most successful against the average players who are able to fold decent hands.

Using the flop to determine whether or not to continuation bet.

The success of a continuation bet can be improved depending on what cards [the flop \(../hand-guide/flop/\)](https://pokercoaching.com/hand-guide/flop/) brings.

Continuation bet example.

You hold A♣ Q♦ and the flop comes 2♠ K♥ 6♦, it is difficult for your opponent to call a continuation bet unless they are holding at least a pair of kings. So even though your opponent had a 2 in 3 chance of making a pair on the flop, if they make a pair with the six or the two, they are still likely to fold because your continuation bet makes it look as though you have a pair higher than a six or better.

Good flop for a continuation bet example hand history.

However, if you hold A♣ Q♦ and the flop comes J♠ K♥ 8♥, a continuation bet is more likely to get called because of the flush and straight draw possibilities. As you can see, the play is more likely to work when your opponent can only call if they have a strong made hand with no draw.

Bad flop for a continuation bet example hand history.

Always consider the texture of the flop and how likely it is that your opponent will have made a hand that they will be prepared to call a bet with. The wetter (more coordinated) the flop is, the more reluctant you should be to attempt a continuation bet when you have not made a strong hand yourself.

Factors that influence continuation betting.

1. The number of players in the pot.
2. Your [position \(../basic/position/\)](https://pokercoaching.com/basic/position/) in the hand.

Number of players in the pot.

The play is more successful against 1 opponent rather than 2 or more because of the simple fact that there is a greater chance that an opponent has connected with the flop. It is recommended that you restrict the use of continuation bets to when you are up against one opponent, although it is possible to fire a successful bet against multiple opponents.

The less players there are in the pot, the greater the chances of your continuation bet being successful. Try to only use continuation bets when you are heads up in a hand.

You should also remember that the more you use continuation bets, the less respect you will get for them as play goes on. Be aware of the frequency that you use them so that you don't end up being on the end of a re-raise or check-raise ([../check-raise/](#)) from a player who has figured you out.

Position in the hand.

Position also helps because if you are last to act as you have the opportunity to see your opponent act first and decide whether you believe a continuation bet will be successful. But beware of tricky players who may expect you to make a continuation bet and check-raise you.

Continuation bets are more successful when you have position over your opponent(s).

This is not uncommon so try and get as good a knowledge of your opponent as possible before making moves and be prepared to fold if you hold nothing. Don't feel as though you have to call if you get raised because you are more than likely not pot-committed. Just fold your cards and accept that the play didn't work out that time, save your chips for when you do make the hand.

Continuation bet evaluation.

Continuation bets are commonplace in today's Texas hold em poker ([/](#)) game, so it is in your best interest to familiarize yourself with them and start incorporating them into your play.

There are no set rules to when these plays will work, but there are guidelines as mentioned above that you can follow to help improve the effectiveness of the play. The best way to learn how and when to use continuation bets is to go and sit down at a table and experiment a little. The good thing about continuation bets is that they are relatively inexpensive to use, so you won't be losing a whole load of money trying to learn how and when to use them.

Related articles.

- Continuation Betting ([/videos/wilcox/articles/continuation-betting/](#)). (By Jack Wilcox ([/videos/wilcox/](#)))

For more strategy on how and when to making continuation bets, watch SplitSuit's [C-Betting Like A Champion \(/videos/splitsuit/cbetting/\)](#) concept video.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](#).

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P **pre-fab**
0 points · 6 years ago

In the definition of continuation bet you state, "This play is often successful because of the fact that 2 times out of 3 your opponent will not make a pair on the flop."

But then in the example you write, "So even though your opponent had a 2 in 3 chance of making a pair on the flop, if they make a pair with the six or the two, they are still likely to fold because your continuation bet makes it look a though you have a pair higher than a six or better."

In the latter shouldn't it read "1 in 3 chance of making a pair on the flop..." or am I missing something?

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 3 years ago

3 years late to the party here, but since I've gotten back into poker during the pandemic and this site has been a valuable resource for me, I reckon other folks might be reading this and coming to the comments looking for the same answer - Villain will in fact miss the flop 2/3s of the time. The chance of making a pair on the flop is about 32.5%. At first I thought maybe the author was saying "even if V DID have a 2/3 chance at making a pair..." but that doesn't make sense in the context, so I'm sure this is just a typo and the author meant to say "not making a pair" - i.e., in the 1 in 3 chance they make a pair and it happens to be with the 6 or 2, your C-bet still has fold equity because most of the time Villain won't be confident that he can beat a better pair than his sixes.

Tread carefully at the micros though! A lot of the fish at 2nl/5nl will consistently call three streets with 2nd pair or worse, so be prepared to give up if your C-bet gets called and you don't improve on the turn (at the micros). I've punted off more buy-ins than I care to admit at the micros, repping a strong range & trying to triple barrel a station off their 2nd pair.

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Semi Bluffing Examples

[The Semi Bluff \(../\)](#) > [Semi Bluffing Examples](#)

Here are a two examples that highlight how it's more profitable (+EV) to bluff with semi bluffs as opposed to "total bluffs".

1. Cbetting the flop as a bluff.
2. Check-raising the turn as a bluff.

If you're not familiar with working out EV, you should check out the article on [expected value \(../../mathematics/expected-value/\)](#) first.

1) Cbetting the flop as a bluff.

We raise to 3bb from late position in a game of \$25NL. Everyone else folds except for the BB who calls.

Flop: K♥ T♣ 4♦

Pot: \$1.60

Our opponent checks and the action is on us.

Let's assume that we know for a fact that if we make a [cbet \(../../continuation-bet/\)](#) of \$1.20, our opponent is going to **fold their hand 40% of the time**. When our opponent does call the other 60% of the time, they will have any pair, mid-pocket pair, OESD or better. So a fair reflection of their calling range looks like this:

AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22

Our opponent's calling range against our cbet on a KT4 flop.

Note: I left out AK and AKs because we're assuming that they would 3bet (./././plays/3bet/). those hands preflop.

To keep it simple, let's also say that we know that our opponent is not going to check-raise (./././check-raise/) us on the flop. In addition, if our cbet gets called we will both check the turn and river to see a showdown (unlikely, but the EV is the most important thing here).

Let's look at the EV of bluffing with different types of hands in this situation.

- 72o - virtually a total bluff.
- A9o - a fairly weak semi bluff (just one over card to the board).
- Q♥ J♥ - a strong semi bluff (open ended straight draw and backdoor flush draw).

a) 72o - virtually a total bluff.

Our equity against our opponent's calling range with 72o = 5%.

Hand Distribution			Equity
Player 1	R/D	72o	5.143%
Player 2	R/D	JJ-44,ATs,A4s,K8s+,QTs+,JT8s+,5	94.857%

Here are the different possible outcomes and the amount of money we expect to win/lose on average from each.

- FOLD EQUITY = Our opponent folds.**
 - We win \$1.60, 40% of the time.
 - $\$1.60 \times 0.4 = \0.64 .

- **POT EQUITY 1 = Our opponent calls and we improve to make the best hand.**
 - We win \$2.80 (\$1.60 + \$1.20) 5% of the time.
 - $\$2.80 \times 0.05 = \0.14
- **POT EQUITY 2 = Our opponent calls and we don't improve.**
 - We lose \$1.20 95% of the time.
 - $-\$1.20 \times 0.95 = -\1.14

The last two outcomes (the overall pot equity result) will happen 60% of the time. Therefore, we will need to multiply these two results by 60% (0.6) to account for the fact that they only happen a portion of the time.

EV of bluffing with 72o.

- EV = Fold Equity + Pot Equity
- EV = $(\$0.64) + \{ 0.6 \times [(\$0.14) - (\$1.14)] \}$
- EV = $(\$0.64) + \{ -\$0.60 \}$
- EV = **+\$0.04**

b) A9o - a fairly weak semi bluff (just one over card to the board).

Our equity against our opponent's calling range with A9o = 18%

Hand Distribution			Equity
Player 1	R D	A9o	18.049%
Player 2	R D	JJ-44,ATs,A4s,K8s+,QTs+,JT8s+,5	81.951%

EV of cbet bluffing with A9o

- EV = Fold Equity + Pot Equity
- EV = $(\$1.60 \times 0.4) + \{ 0.6 \times [(\$2.80 \times 0.18) + (-\$1.20 \times 0.82)] \}$
- EV = $(\$0.64) + \{ 0.6 \times [(\$0.50) - (\$0.98)] \}$
- EV = $(\$0.64) + \{ -\$0.29 \}$
- EV = **+\$0.35**

c) Q♥ J♥ - a strong semi bluff (open ended straight draw and backdoor flush draw).

Our equity against our opponent's calling range with Q♥ J♥ = 45%

Hand Distribution			Equity
Player 1	R D	QhJh	44.945%
Player 2	R D	JJ-44,ATs,A4s,K8s+,QTs+,JT8s+,5	55.055%

EV of cbet bluffing with Q♥ J♥

- EV = Fold Equity + Pot Equity
- EV = (\$1.60 x 0.4) + { 0.6 x [(\$2.80 x 0.45) + (-\$1.20 x 0.55)] }
- EV = (\$0.64) + { 0.6 x [(\$1.12) - (\$0.66)] }
- EV = (\$0.64) + {\$0.28}
- EV = **+\$0.92**

As you can see from this very basic cbetting example, **the presence of equity can turn a borderline -EV play in to a highly +EV play**. You will probably find the difference in EV for each of these cbet bluffs to be very surprising.

They're all bluffs at the end of the day, but bluffing with equity is much better than bluffing without it.

If you're struggling with when and when not to cbet as a bluff, watch this [c-betting strategy video \(/videos/splitsuit/cbetting/\)](/videos/splitsuit/cbetting/) by SplitSuit.

2) Check raising the turn as a bluff.

An opponent makes it 4bb from the button in \$100NL. We call in the BB and everyone else folds.

Flop: 7♠ 8♦ Q♣

Pot: \$8.50

We check, our opponent bets \$5.50 in to the pot and we call.

Turn: 7♠ 8♦ Q♣ K♠

Pot: \$19.50

We check and our opponent bets \$13.

Pot: \$32.50

We only have \$50 left in our stack, so we decide to check-raise bluff

([/videos/wilcox/articles/check-raising-as-a-bluff/](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wilcox/articles/check-raising-as-a-bluff/)), all in. This means our opponent has to call \$37 to win a pot of \$82.5.

Pot: \$82.50

We expect our opponent to fold 35% of the time. However, the remaining 65% of the time our opponent will call with AQ, any K with a strong kicker and strong draws or better. Therefore, their range will look something like this:

AA	AKs	AQs	AJs	ATs	A9s	A8s	A7s	A6s	A5s	A4s	A3s	A2s
AKo	KK	KQs	KJs	KTs	K9s	K8s	K7s	K6s	K5s	K4s	K3s	K2s
AQo	KQo	QQ	QJs	QTs	Q9s	Q8s	Q7s	Q6s	Q5s	Q4s	Q3s	Q2s
AJo	KJo	QJo	JJ	JTs	J9s	J8s	J7s	J6s	J5s	J4s	J3s	J2s
ATo	KTo	QTo	JTo	TT	T9s	T8s	T7s	T6s	T5s	T4s	T3s	T2s
A9o	K9o	Q9o	J9o	T9o	99	98s	97s	96s	95s	94s	93s	92s
A8o	K8o	Q8o	J8o	T8o	98o	88	87s	86s	85s	84s	83s	82s
A7o	K7o	Q7o	J7o	T7o	97o	87o	77	76s	75s	74s	73s	72s
A6o	K6o	Q6o	J6o	T6o	96o	86o	76o	66	65s	64s	63s	62s
A5o	K5o	Q5o	J5o	T5o	95o	85o	75o	65o	55	54s	53s	52s
A4o	K4o	Q4o	J4o	T4o	94o	84o	74o	64o	54o	44	43s	42s
A3o	K3o	Q3o	J3o	T3o	93o	83o	73o	63o	53o	43o	33	32s
A2o	K2o	Q2o	J2o	T2o	92o	82o	72o	62o	52o	42o	32o	22

Our opponent's calling range after we check/raise all in on the turn.

What does the EV look like for different bluffs and semi bluffs in this situation?

- 32o - virtually a total bluff.
- T9o - a decent semi bluff (middle straight draw).
- J♠ T♠ - a strong semi bluff (nut straight draw + decent flush draw).

a) 32o - virtually a total bluff.

Our equity against our opponent's calling range with 32o = 7%

Hand Distribution			Equity
Player 1	R D	32o	6.832%
Player 2	R D	QQ+, 88-77, AQs+, AsJs, AsTs, As9s, As8	93.168%

- **FOLD EQUITY = Our opponent folds.**
 - We win \$32.50 (this is what's currently in the pot) 35% of the time.
 - $\$32.50 \times 0.35 = \11.38 .
- **POT EQUITY 1 = Our opponent calls and we improve to make the best hand.**
 - We win \$69.50 (\$32.50 + \$37) 7% of the time.
 - $\$69.50 \times 0.07 = \4.9
- **POT EQUITY 2 = Our opponent calls and we don't improve.**
 - We lose \$50 93% of the time.
 - $-\$50 \times 0.93 = -\46.5

Again, don't forget that the the amount we win and lose when **called** only happens a weighted portion of the time. Therefore, we have to multiply the *Pot Equity result* by the overall likelihood that it takes place, which is 65%.

EV of cbet bluffing with 72o

- $EV = \text{Fold Equity} + \text{Pot Equity}$
- $EV = (\$11.38 + \{ 0.65 \times [(\$4.9) - (\$46.5)] \})$
- $EV = (\$11.38 + \{-\$27.04 \})$
- **$EV = -\$15.66$**

b) T9o - a decent semi bluff (middle straight draw).

Our equity against our opponent's calling range with T9o = 26%

Hand Distribution		Equity
Player 1	<div>R D</div> T9o	25.652%
Player 2	<div>R D</div> QQ+,88-77,AQs+,AsJs,AsTs,As9s,As8	74.348%

EV of cbet bluffing with T9o

- $EV = \text{Fold Equity} + \text{Pot Equity}$
- $EV = (\$32.50 \times 0.35) + \{ 0.65 \times [(\$69.50 \times 0.26) + (-\$50 \times 0.74)] \}$
- $EV = (\$11.38) + \{ 0.65 \times [(\$18.07) - (\$37)] \}$
- $EV = (\$11.38) + \{-\$12.30\}$
- **$EV = -\$0.92$**

c) J♠ T♠ - a strong semi bluff (nut straight draw + decent flush draw).

Our equity against our opponent's calling range with J♠ T♠ = 43%

Hand Distribution			Equity
Player 1	R D	JsTs	42.598%
Player 2	R D	QQ+,88-77,AQs+,AsJs,AsTs,As9s,As8	57.402%

EV of cbet bluffing with J♠ T♠

- EV = Fold Equity + Pot Equity
- EV = (\$32.50 x 0.35) + { 0.65 x [(\$69.50 x 0.43) + (-\$50 x 0.57)] }
- EV = (\$11.38) + { 0.65 x [(\$29.89) - (\$28.5)] }
- EV = (\$11.38) + {\$0.90}
- EV = **\$12.28**

In this example, we need to have a good amount of equity in the hand for this bluff to be successful due to the fact that our opponent is calling quite frequently with a strong range. If our opponent was more likely to fold, semi-bluffing with the T9o could have become slightly +EV rather than -EV.

Important notes.

1) When working out the final EV for semi bluffing, **don't forget to multiply the combined EV from winning and losing the hand after being called by the percentage chance of being called in the first place.** If you do not do this the results will be skewed.

2) The first cbetting example isn't great because it assumes that you will see a river card for free and that you won't bet if you hit your draw. However, it is useful to note that [implied odds](#) ([../../mathematics/implied-odds/](#)). (winning more money when you hit) can help to turn slightly -EV plays in the +EV plays.

3) **The less likely it is for your opponent to fold (the less fold equity you have), the more actual equity you need in the hand to make semi-bluffing profitable.**

4) If you have no [fold equity](#) ([../../mathematics/equity/fold/](#)) with a drawing hand in position, you're better off checking to see a free card. There is no value in putting more money in to the pot if you have no fold equity and just a draw.

5) Don't forget that [reverse implied odds](http://reverse-implied-odds.com) ([../../mathematics/reverse-implied-odds/](http://reverse-implied-odds.com)) will have an effect on your equity in the hand if you get called. It's not a great idea to semi-bluff with weak flushes for example because your opponent could be drawing to a bigger flush.

Further reading on the EV of semi-bluffing.

Getting your head around the EV involved in semi-bluffs is tricky to say the least. If my particular teaching method hasn't worked for you, try having a read through these pages:

- [Semi-Bluffing By Raising All In](http://videos/wilcox/articles/semi-bluffing-by-raising-all-in/) ([../videos/wilcox/articles/semi-bluffing-by-raising-all-in/](http://videos/wilcox/articles/semi-bluffing-by-raising-all-in/)).
- [Calculating EV Part II: Making an All-In Raise - 2+2 archives](http://archives1.twoplustwo.com/showflat.php?Cat=0&Number=3069765&page=0&fpart=all&vc=1) (<http://archives1.twoplustwo.com/showflat.php?Cat=0&Number=3069765&page=0&fpart=all&vc=1>).
- [Semi bluffing EV calculation procedure discussion - 2+2 micro stakes forums](https://forumserver.twoplustwo.com/78/micro-small-stakes-full-ring/ev-calc-semi-bluff-math-procedure-check-429599/) (<https://forumserver.twoplustwo.com/78/micro-small-stakes-full-ring/ev-calc-semi-bluff-math-procedure-check-429599/>).

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy](http://strategy.com) ([/strategy/](http://strategy.com)).

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Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

The examples in (1) appear to be calculated incorrectly. Shouldn't they be:

72o opp will fold 40% and call 60% hence $ev = (.40 * 1.60) + (.60 * (.5 * 2.80 - .95 * 1.20)) = +.04$

Writer failed to take into account that the called pots are only 60% (opp folds 40%) of total. Interesting then

that if opp is folding 40%, there would appear to be +ev (assuming no T/R play) for making a bluff w/nada (well, 5% nada).

G **Greg**
0 points · 13 years ago

Nice spot. Article has been updated.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 13 years ago

Hi Greg, awesome stuff here.

FYI the equity diagram in eg 2c is incorrect (its showing the pic for 32o not JsTs) :-)

regs

Zoe19

G **Greg**
0 points · 13 years ago

Good eyes Zoe19. Was linking to the wrong image there. Thanks for letting me know!

V **vliam**
0 points · 11 years ago

you didn't calc the odds that oppo may raise back, sometime we have to fold and there's no chance to improve

L **larskyhnau**
0 points · 7 years ago

The examples show, that bluffing with equity is more profitable than bluffing without equity. However that dont really tell us much. Because checking or calling with equity is also more profitable than doing it without equity. In the example with QJ suited, if we check behind, and the hand gets checked through to the river, we will probably win it at least 60% of the time. Meaning that our EV of checking behind is +0,96, where the EV of betting is only +0,92.

So the rationale for betting a strong draw must be more than the simple fact, it is +EV. It must be, that it makes us tougher to play against, balance our range better, give better implied odds, when we get called and complete our draw, bla bla bla.

M **Max Segal**
0 points · 8 years ago

Isn't it supposed to be 82.5\$ potential win instead of 69.5\$ when we calculate the expected value of semibluff? Or can you explain why you omit the 13\$ of villain's bet?
Thanks.

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The Semi Bluff

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

The Semi Bluff > [Semi Bluffing Examples \(examples/\)](#)

Watching your bluff get called hurts; it really does hurt a lot. Not only that, but repeated poorly executed bluffs eat away at your bankroll causing you to lose more and more money from one session to the next.

Imagine if there was a way to take the sting out of getting called when you bluff. Better yet, what if you could take all your bluffs and almost instantly make them profitable?



Allow me to introduce... the **semi bluff**.

waits for a roar of applause and tears of gratitude and relief

What is a semi bluff?

A semi-bluff is when you bluff, but you still have a chance of improving to make the best hand on future cards.

For example, raising with A♦ 4♦ on a flop of K♦ Q♣ 2♦ would be classed as a *semi-bluff*. It's unlikely that you have the best hand right now (making it a bluff), but a diamond on the turn or the river would give you a flush and the best hand (making it a *semi-bluff*).

What's the difference between a total bluff and a semi bluff?

- **Total bluff** = no (or very little) chance of winning the hand if called.

- **Semi bluff** = some chance of winning the hand if called.

A total bluff has absolutely no chance of winning the hand if called. Therefore, it has 0% equity (<http://pokermathematics.com/equity/>) in the pot.

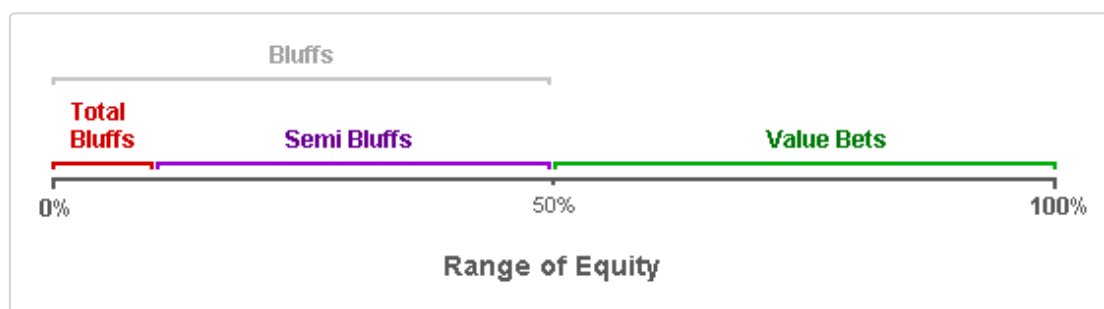
Note: To be more precise, I'd go ahead and say that any hand with less than 10% equity can be classed a "total" bluff. Sometimes even the most clear-cut bluffs will have *some* equity for whatever reason.

Semi bluffs have a decent chance of winning the hand if called, so they have at least some equity in the pot. As you can imagine, different semi bluffs will have varying chances of winning the hand, which means that some will have more equity than others.

For example, semi bluffing with a flush and straight draw hand will have far more equity than semi bluffing with a gutshot straight draw. In general, more chance of improving = more equity.

Semi bluffs can also only be made when there are more cards to come (so on the flop or the turn), as those unknown cards are what's giving you the opportunity to improve. So no, **you can't semi bluff on the river**. On the river, you're either making a pure bluff (0% equity) or you're betting for value (<http://pokermathematics.com/basic/reasons-to-bet/>) and want your opponent to call.

Semi bluffing diagram (range of semi bluffs).



A diagram to highlight the types of bet based on your equity in the hand.

A few important notes about this diagram.

- The less equity you have in the hand the riskier your bluff becomes.
- If you have little or no equity in the hand, your bet is virtually a total bluff.
- If you have more than 50% equity you should be betting for value and hoping to see your opponent to call instead of fold.

If your bluff gets called, you'd much rather have a 35% chance of making the best hand than a 12% chance. It makes mathematical sense for a semi bluffs with higher equity to be more profitable than semi bluffs with lower equity, because you end up winning more often with a higher equity percentage.

How important is semi bluffing?

If you're making a bluff, it's far more profitable to make semi bluffs than pure bluffs.

Try not to think of "total bluffs" as one thing and "semi bluffs" as another. They are both bluffs at the end of the day. Instead, think of semi-bluffs as the better version of "pure bluffs" or "total bluffs" - the good looking and wealthier older brother if you will.

The advantages of semi bluffing.

When you semi bluff, you still have the opportunity to win the hand. As a result, semi bluffs are inherently better than total bluffs.

The fact that you have more equity in the hand with semi bluffs means you're saving much more money over the long run. With total bluffs, you don't have that equity cushion to help you when your bluff gets called.

For example, on a board of QT3 it's far more +EV to bluff with AK than it is to bluff with 72o.

- With AK your bet has fold equity ([../mathematics/equity/fold/](#)) + actual equity (overcards + gutshot).
- With 72o your bet has fold equity only.

The more equity you have when you're putting money in to the pot the better. In fact, in the example above betting with AK is almost certainly +EV ([../mathematics/expected-value/](#)), whereas betting with 72o is likely to be -EV.

This is a prime example of how semi bluffs are better than total bluffs during play.

Additional advantages of semi bluffing.

It gives you the initiative in the hand. If you bet out instead of checking, you gain the initiative ([../concepts/initiative/](#)). This means that it's more likely that your opponent will check to you on future streets, making your decisions a lot easier.

It can disguise your hand. Some players will expect you to check and call with drawing hands, not bet and/or raise. Therefore, you may well win more when you hit your draw because your opponent is less likely to give you credit for having it.

Good hands to semi bluff.

- Big flush draws.
- Open-ended straight draws.
- Flush draws + open-ended straight draws.

All of these hands have good amounts of equity against made hands like pairs, which is the exact reason why they are great hands for semi-bluffing.

Bad hands to semi bluff.

- Gutshot straight draws.
- Weak flush draws.

Care to take a wild guess as to why these aren't great hands for semi bluffing? Yep, that's right... they don't have a lot of equity.

Gutshot straight draws have poor odds of hitting, which means less equity. Weak flushes have a problems with reverse implied odds ([../mathematics/reverse-implied-odds/](#)). (even if you hit, you could still lose money to a stronger flush), which means poor equity again.

Still, these hands are better to bluff with than a hand with 0% equity (or close to it). It's just that they're not as good as the ones above.

Check out the percentage odds chart ([../tools/odds-charts/percentage/](#)) or the ratio odds chart ([../tools/odds-charts/ratio/](#)) to compare the odds of completing different types of drawing hands in Texas Hold'em ([/](#)).

Semi bluffing examples.

Read the full article on [semi bluffing examples \(examples/\)](#).

This article is already long enough as it is. The examples in the article linked to above also cover the EV of bluffing with different types of hands with varying equity. Thrilling stuff.

When not to semi bluff.

| Don't semi bluff if you know your opponent is going to call.

If you know that it's very likely that your opponent will call your bet, it defeats the object of bluffing.

If your opponent isn't going to fold your semi bluff loses its fold equity, so all you are left with is your actual equity in the pot. Now, seeing as your actual equity isn't that great because you have a drawing hand, it doesn't make sense to put more money in to the pot unnecessarily.

Evaluation of semi bluffing in poker.

The best types of bluffs are with hands that have a fair chance of winning if called. Or to put it another way, they have a decent amount of equity in the pot although not being the best hand at the time.

The more equity your hand has when running a semi bluff the better. Think of the equity behind you as a safety net. The more equity you have the bigger the net is, and the more money you will save when you fall (i.e. your bluff gets called).

This is not to say that pure bluffs don't have their place in poker. If you never make pure bluffs it makes you easier to play against, but I'm not going to get in to that here. Check out [balanced ranges \(/../concepts/range-balancing/\)](#) for more on that.

But basically, **if you're not fluent in when and when not to bluff, you're far better off making semi bluffs than pure bluffs**. If you're a [beginner poker player \(/../general/beginner-tips/\)](#), simply swapping pure bluffs for semi bluffs will increase your win rate (or lessen your loss-rate) significantly.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](#).

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L **larskyhnau**
0 points · 11 years ago

It should be noted, that strong draws will often have more than 50% equity in a pot, and therefore it is up for debate, if raising with such hands can even be classified as a bluff at all. That could be a flushdraw with two overcards to the board (like AK suited), or it could be a flush draw and open ended straightdraw at the same time.

So in my opinion its not as simple as saying, that raising with Qd, 9s on a 9c, 8c, 2d flop is for value, because you have a made hand (top pair), while raising with Ac,Kc on the same flop is a semibluff, because you dont have a made hand.

With Ac, Kc playing the turn will be very easy, because you will either have improved to a nut flush or top pair top kicker or still be stuck with A high. So its usually going to be very easy to classify your hand strength and make the right decisions, and you will often be able to extract at least some extra money from the hand, if you improve.

By contrast with Q9 playing almost all turns are going to be extremely difficult, because nearly all turn cards will either put overcards on the board or fill one of the draws. So you will need to check or check behind almost all turn cards leaving you no chance to get more money in the pot and also vulnerable to being bluffed off your hand, because you are showing weakness by checking.

And even if you catch one of the few "good" turn cards (apart from a 9 or Q obviously) you could still be behind to a better kicker or an overpair, so even in that situation you probably have to check and maybe even fold to pressure a large percentage of the time.

So I would much rather get called, if I raise that flop with Ac, Kc, than if I raise it with Qd, 9s. And therefore in my opinion raising with a weakish top pair is actually a semibluff or at least done mostly in an attempt to clean up equity. While raising with a flush draw and two overcards is definitely a raise for value.

P **Pete Schultz**
0 points · 4 years ago

was raising with top pair classified as value betting, ever?

K **kalina**
0 points · 8 years ago

Where is the diagram?=(

G **Greg**
0 points · 7 years ago

I broke the link when I moved the file around. Just fixed it. Sorry about the 7-month wait.

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Home ► Strategy ► Other ► Variance ►

Poker Variance

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).



In this article I am going to talk about the basics of **variance in poker** and how it affects your game.

There can be a lot of mathematics involved with variance. However, this is largely going to be a non-mathsy article about variance, which I'm sure will be very welcomed by a large number of you reading this.

What is variance?

Variance is the downswings and upswings involved with playing poker.

It's quite possibly the least technical definition for a term I have ever written, but the "ups and downs" of poker when it comes to winning and losing money sums it up rather well.

Variance is the difference between how much money you expect to win on average over the long run and the results you are seeing in the short term. So for example, if according to your win rate you expect to win \$500 in a month on average but end up losing \$1,000 instead, this is attributed to variance.

Examples of variance in poker.

Going all-in with pocket aces.

Let's say that you are playing heads up against a total maniac that moves all-in on every hand. Furthermore, by a pure stroke of luck and through the magic of me being able to make examples up, you are dealt pocket aces (<http://pokerstove.com/hands/pockets/aces/>). 5 times in a row. Obviously, you decide to call all-in 5 times before the flop too.

Hand Distribution			Equity
Player 1	 	AA	85.204%
Player 2	 	random	14.796%

Equity of aces against a random hand from [Pokerstove](http://pokerstove.com/tools/software/pokerstove/) (<http://pokerstove.com/tools/software/pokerstove/>).

Against any random hand, AA has an 85% chance of winning. Therefore we expect to win roughly 4 out of these 5 all-ins, although we would ideally like to win them all.

However, you actually end up losing all 5 all-ins against your opponent's 5 random hands. It was amazingly unlikely (0.007% unlikely), but the fact is that it is possible (1 in 1,410,192 possible) and it did happen.

On average you expected to win 4 out of these 5 all-ins, but thanks to variance you ended up winning 0 out of 5. As you can see, variance is the difference between the expected long term results and actual short term results, in this case it is 4 buy-ins worth of **variance**.

Variance in graphs.



(<http://www.poker2002.com/images/variance-graph-a.png>).

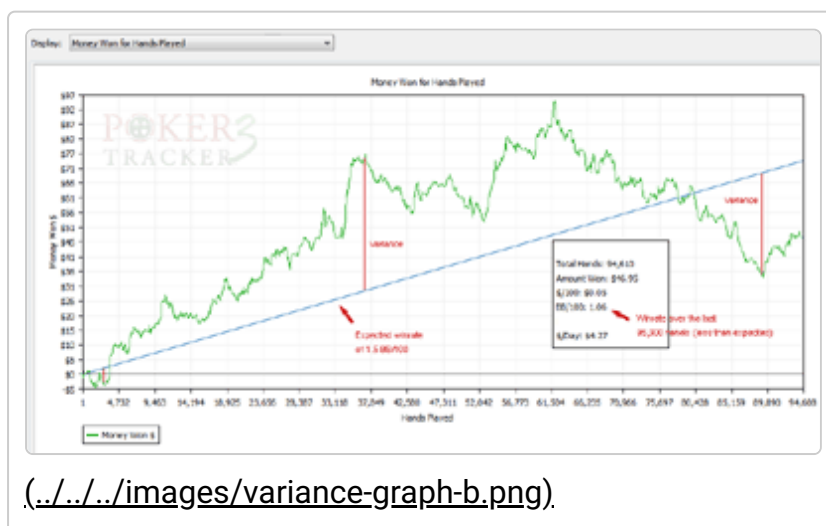
Image credit: [Poker2002](http://www.poker2002.com)

(<http://www.flickr.com/photos/45698503@N06/4203841657/>).

As you can see from this graph the rate at which this player wins money is far from linear. Sure, his stats may show a winrate of 1.06 BB/100, but there are times where he loses more than he expects and wins more than he expects.

Variance compared to an expected winrate.

However, now let's say that this player had a winrate of 1.5 BB/100 (3 bb/100) over his last 1 million hands prior to this current time period. If we plot this expected winrate on the graph, we get to see how much variance is taking place compared to what this player expects to be winning in a perfect world.



Over a long enough period of time his actual results will meet up with his expected results, but in the short term the amount that he wins or loses in the hands of our good friend variance.

For more information on stuff like BB/100 and bb/100, see the article on [win rates in poker](#) ([../winrate/](#)).

What causes variance?

The element of luck causes variance.

As we know there is an element of skill involved in poker, but there is also a lot of luck. We have no control over the hands that we are dealt or the cards that are dealt on the board, so this uncertainty or "luck" is the cause of variance over the short term.

We all have to deal with it and it's to be expected, so get used to it. Regardless of how good you are, those 5, 10 and even 20+ buy in downswings will hit us at various points in our poker careers.

What influences variance?

There are a few factors that can increase or decrease the amount of variance that you encounter:

1. **Your playing style** (</strategy/general/playing-styles/>). If you play a very loose-aggressive style of play then you will be involved in a lot more pots and will be consequently risking more money than your average tight player. The looser you are and the more risks you take, the greater your variance will be.
2. **The poker game**. Omaha has less variance than Hold'em because the hands in Omaha generally have less of an edge against one another when players move all-in (odds of each hand winning are closer to 60/40 as opposed to something like 75/25). Therefore the smaller the edges, the less the variance.
3. **The betting type**. No limit has greater variance than limit poker, where the amount of money that players can put in to the pot is much smaller in relation to the blinds in limit games than it is in no limit games. The more money you can risk, the greater the variance.
4. **The game type**. Large MTTs will have much more variance than SNGs because you expect to win far less often. However, when you do win an MTT you receive sudden large payouts, which obviously results in higher levels of variance.

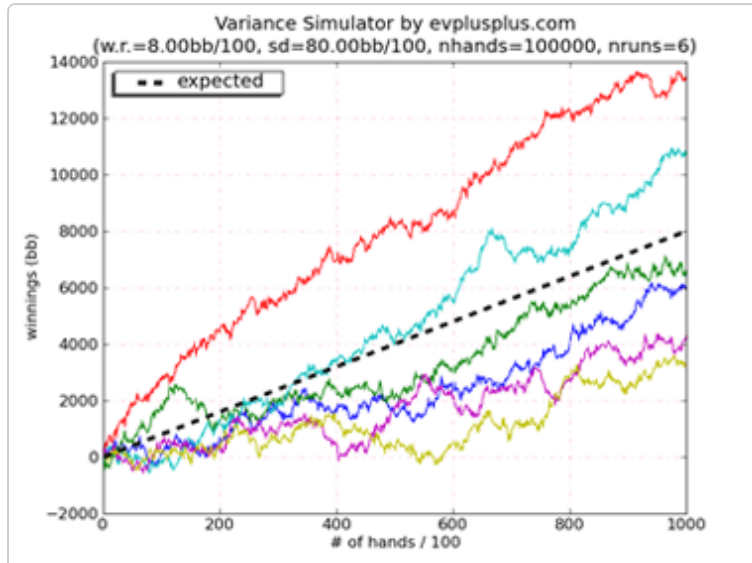
There are definitely a lot more factors that can affect the variance that you come up against in your poker career, but these are the most obvious ones and the ones that will have the greatest influence on the size of your "ups and downs".

Top Tip: Add some extra variance to your bankroll by [playing poker with bitcoin \(/bitcoin/\)](/bitcoin/).

Anticipate your swings with a variance simulator.

To get a really good idea of how much your winnings can vary over a set number of hands, try using this [poker variance simulator \(http://pokerdope.com/poker-variance-calculator/\)](http://pokerdope.com/poker-variance-calculator/).

Just enter your winrate and [standard deviation \(/articles/software/standard-deviation/\)](/articles/software/standard-deviation/) (which can be found in [PokerTracker \(/visit/poker-tracker/\)](/visit/poker-tracker/) or [Holdem Manager \(/visit/holdem-manager/\)](/visit/holdem-manager/)) and see how differently the outcomes can be.



An example of a variance simulator graph taken over 100,000 hands from evplusplus.com (no longer active).

AnskyPoker.com also has a cool [downloadable excel variance simulator](http://www.anskypoker.com/2009/06/100k-hand-variance-simulator/) (<http://www.anskypoker.com/2009/06/100k-hand-variance-simulator/>). too, but it's not as quick and easy to use as the online simulator at ev++.

You may be surprised at the size of the possible swings and just how different your results can be over large sample sizes. It's a real eye opener if you think your recent 5 buy-in [downswing](http://www.anskypoker.com/2009/06/100k-hand-variance-simulator/) (<http://www.anskypoker.com/2009/06/100k-hand-variance-simulator/>) was bad.

More information on standard deviation and variance can be found in the [Holdem Manager guide video](http://www.anskypoker.com/2009/06/100k-hand-variance-simulator/) (<http://www.anskypoker.com/2009/06/100k-hand-variance-simulator/>) starting at 6:16. It also gives you a quick example of how to use the ev++ variance simulator.

How variance affects the game.

1. It makes it hard to tell if you're playing well or not.
2. Variance can be mentally draining for even the best players.
3. On a positive note, variance is the reason why the bad players keep playing.

1) Thanks to variance, you can never truly rely on your short-term results as an indication of how well you are currently playing. You might be playing out-of-your-skin poker but still lose money, which makes it frustratingly difficult to analyse what you might be doing right and what you might be doing wrong.

You have to trust that you are making good plays and feel genuinely comfortable about how you are playing, regardless of what current results attempt to indicate. Confidence in your ability at the poker table is a very important quality to possess during a downswing. You just have to keep learning and trust that it's paying off.

2) The fact that you can lose money even when you are playing well is horrible. However, you have to get used to it if you want to win money from poker over the long run. Playing well when you're winning is easy; playing well when you're losing is a different kettle of fish.

Learn to play you're 'A game' at all times or variance will get the better of you. We all encounter bad doses of variance, but not all players can handle it.

3) On the other side of the coin, the fact that players (specifically bad ones) can win money even when they are playing terribly is actually a good thing. If these bad players never won any money, half of them would just quit playing. Be thankful that bad beats ([../..//psychology/bad-beats/](http://www.psychology/bad-beats/)) exist so that these bad players can slowly but surely hand their money to you.

Evaluation of variance in poker.

Variance happens. Sometimes it sends us on ridiculously good upswings, sometimes it sends on horrendously frustrating downswings. Either way, at the end of the day you have to accept the fact that variance plays a big part in every poker player's game. If you expect variance to kick the shit out of you once in a while, it will be much easier for you to deal with it.

For further reading, you may find the articles on expected value ([../..//mathematics/expected-value/](http://www.mathematics/expected-value/)) and Sklansky bucks ([../..//mathematics/sklansky-dollars/](http://www.mathematics/sklansky-dollars/)) interesting too.

This particular article has only covered the general stuff about variance in poker. For a more math-orientated look at this topic, try the article on calculating variance at AintLuck.com (<http://www.aintluck.com/strategy/basic/poker-variance/>). .

Go back to the awesome Texas Hold'em Strategy ([/strategy/](http://www.aintluck.com/strategy/)).

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? **Anonymous**
0 points · 13 years ago

yes i liked this article. it was the first ive read about variance that did not include some un-comprehensible equation. thanks

G **Greg**
0 points · 13 years ago

Haha, thanks!

If you are interested in something a little less comprehensible on the topic of variance though, check out my article on standard deviation: <http://www.thepokerbank.com...>
(<http://www.thepokerbank.com/articles/software/standard-deviation/>).

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 11 years ago

I don't understand why you say Omaha has less variance than Hold'em. For me, the smaller the edge, the greater the variance. Imagine You go All in with AA vs random cards in hold'em, you expect to win roughly 4 out of 5. Now imagine you go All in Omaha, in a situation that you are a 1.5:1 favorite. The chances that you lose 5 times are much higher than losing the same 5 times when you are a 4:1 favorite. If you were referring to PLO8, then ok, but Omaha has greater variance in my opinion.

I don't understand why you say that no limit has greater variance, either. Limit is a game of pushing small edges, you can hardly deny the right odds vs anything. The smaller the edges, the higher the variance.

Maybe I'm missing something, but it's what makes sense to me.

H **hopeansheet**
0 points · 8 years ago

I meant playing against three people in Omaha = playing against 12 people in Texas



Anonymous

0 points · 13 months ago

Fantastic, thanks so much.



Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

put it this way. what is better to choose? if someone offered you 10 million dollars to take AA versus Q7o, but they had a gun to your head and pulled the trigger if AA lost in that ONE hand,would you take it? Or would you rather take same the spot in omaha where you see the flop first before making your life or death decision?



Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

Possibly the best explanation of the extremely important concept 'VARIANCE' as it applies to Poker.



Greg

0 points · 11 years ago

Thanks Ray :D



hopeansheet

0 points · 8 years ago

Yeah I think Omaha have a little more variance, playing against 3 people in Omaha is like playing 12 people in in Texas ,thus luck is a bigger factor, I'm sure it was just a mistake that you made and you don't believe that



hopeansheet

0 points · 8 years ago

Thank you very much for that very informative information, I also am learning variance can be used in blackjack somewhat, the less chances you take vs the house the better off you are I only double down 10 or 11 verse 5 or 6, and if I have something like ace 4 vs 4 I will double down for less, less chance for house to get lucky and if I do lose , I lose less, and of course never take insurance, never take even money, never play the "gimmick"" bets ... and even ace ace vs 10 is not so great to split all the time because you only get one card more luck involved, you have to play like this for numerous hours and grind it out and you do have a slight advantage, they hate players like that.... doubling down is the only advantage players have and almost

all the time they double down for the full amount ,no matter what the cards are ,...which is wrong... sorry if I turn this into a blackjack thing but a bell went off in my head and I finally learned that variance can be used in BJ ,but somewhat less , thanks again! Excellent informative article

H **hopeansheet**
0 points · 8 years ago

Variance is basically the backbone of any gambling or card games, decrease the amount of the game you are playing getting lucky on you if possible.... try to avoid big loses based on luck ... don't mind taking simple wins ...Gnome Sayin , an Sheeit ? But don't let the word get out.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 11 years ago

Perfect article. But I guess you probably get a little confused, when typed Omaha has LESS VARIANCE than Holden. Its actually the other way around COMPLETELY. Every lousy player knows that in Omaha you have to deal with twice as big variance.

D **Daniel Gilbert**
0 points · 10 years ago

<http://wtfviz.net/post/6768...> (<http://wtfviz.net/post/67680808013/variance-of-a-deterministic-function>).

G **Greg**
0 points · 10 years ago

Ha ha. We'll try and make some better ones.

brb, googling "deterministic function"

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 10 years ago

Lols hows this for a downswing. The past week I've had KK about 20 times. Lost with it about 17 out of 20 times. Sigh, that's poker folks. I honestly have a few strategies I'm willing to test out regarding upswings. Maximizing said upswings, I suppose I need to experiment and see what the results bring I guess

G **Greg**
0 points · 9 years ago

Ouch. Your monitor still intact?

It sounds like you're pretty level-headed, so on the plus side if you've made it through a swing like this then you're not going to have too many problems moving forward.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

brilliant article. well done

G

Greg

0 points · 11 years ago

Thank you!

?

Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

or put it this way. if the heat were 4:1 favourites to win a 7 game series, you would bet on them to win the series right? but if it was a one game knockout. anything could happen in one game.

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Poker Counterfeiting

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#)

Counterfeiting in poker is not exactly a strategic concept, but it's something that you should be aware of and be prepared to deal with whenever it crops up.



Even if you've only played poker for a week, you have more than likely been counterfeited at least once or twice – you just didn't know there was a name for it.

So here's an explanation (with examples) of **counterfeiting in Texas Hold'em** with a quick guide on what to do if and when it happens.

What is counterfeiting in Texas Hold'em?

You are “counterfeited” when a card comes on the board that makes one or more of your holecards redundant (no longer as useful), without the basic value of your overall hand changing.

Note: Despite the exciting name and my little image at the top, there's nothing illegal about counterfeiting in poker. It's a perfectly legal (albeit annoying) occurrence. It doesn't have much to do with dodgy money either.

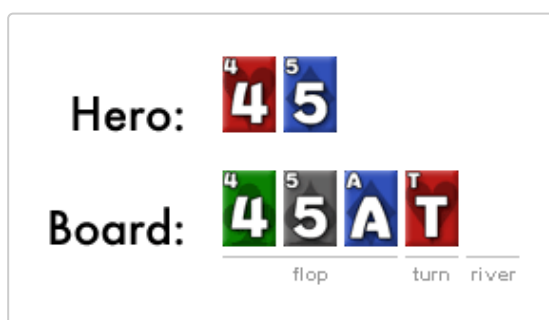
Being counterfeited in poker is never a good thing.

Even though the basic value of your hand hasn't changed, **it usually means that you're either going to end up losing money or not winning as much money** as you could have done if you hadn't been counterfeited.

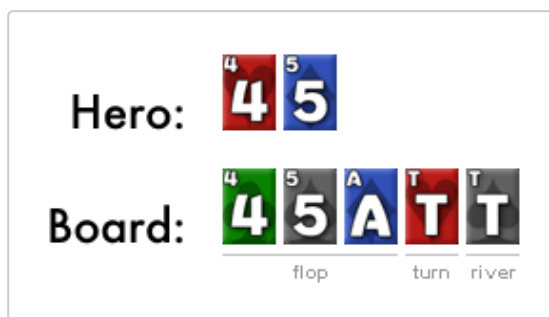
Examples of counterfeiting in Texas Hold'em.

As awesome as that definition was, there's never any substitute for a good set of examples when trying to explain a specific concept. Here are 2 (and a bit) common ones that you'll most frequently run in to.

1) *Two pair counterfeiting.*



You have bottom two pair on this [turn](#) ([../../hand-guide/turn/](#)). Not the strongest hand in the world, but you will usually be able to get decent [value](#) ([../../concepts/value-betting/](#)) from opponents' top-pair type hands. However, lo and behold, the river brings the following card:



Your pair of 4s has been made completely redundant thanks to the overpair on the board. The T on the [river](#) ([../../hand-guide/river/](#)) has **counterfeited** your pair of 4s.

- **Your best hand before the river:** 44-55-A
- **Your best hand after the river:** 55-TT-A

Your hand still has the same basic value as before (two pair), but nonetheless your [expectation](#) ([../../mathematics/expected-value/](#)) for the hand has decreased because of your counterfeited pair of 4s.

Why is it bad?

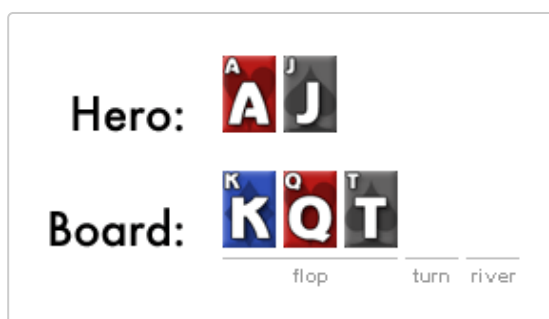
You are forced to use the pair of Ts on the board to make a two-pair hand of **Ts and 5s**, replacing your original two-pair of **5s and 4s**. You still have that pair of 4s, but it's effectively useless because there is no such thing as three-pair in Texas Hold'em.

You've lost the *advantage* that using both of your holecards to make that original two-pair gave you.

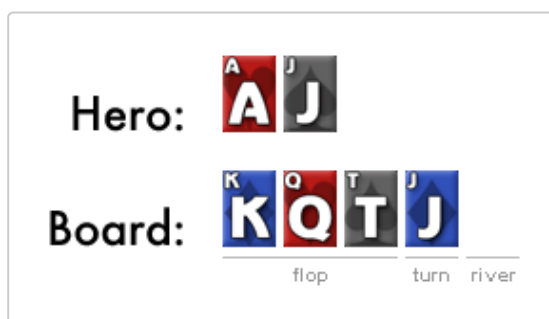
If your opponent had a pair of As on the turn, they will now have a better two-pair hand than you (As and Ts). In addition, if your opponent has a pocket pair of 66+ they will again have just made a better two-pair hand than you on the river.

So whereas if you hadn't been counterfeited (the board not pairing) on this river you could have won a decent amount of money from an opponent with top pair only, you could now easily end up *losing* money to a new and better two-pair hand.

2) ***Straight counterfeiting.***



What a perfect [flop](#) ([../hand-guide/flop/](#)), you've just flopped the nut straight. In this sort of situation you can usually just sit back and think about how you're going to [maximize value](#) ([../concepts/rem/maximize/](#)) from the hand. However, the turn is the following:



That's pretty annoying, because **now any other player at the table with any random Ace will have a straight too**, plus you're less likely to get much more action from one-pair or two-pair hands because the board looks so scary.

Again, you still have the nut straight (so your hand value hasn't changed), but you expect to make less money from the hand than if the J didn't show up on the turn.

But wait, it can still get worse...



...so now every single player left in the hand has the nut straight. Your original straight has been completely counterfeited, as both the Ace and Jack in your hand have been rendered useless.

Why is it bad?

I've pretty much explained the negatives in this hand as we went along. In a nutshell though, **the cards in your hand gave you less of an advantage** as you proceeded to be partially counterfeited on the turn, and then fully counterfeited on the river.

You will now get no value from pairs and sets that your opponents might have held, which could have resulted in winning a pretty big pot for yourself. Instead, you will just split the pot with the remaining players in the hand.

3) Other counterfeiting examples.

The two-pair and straight counterfeiting examples above are the most common and obvious counterfeiting situations you will run in to. However, here are a few more for good measure.

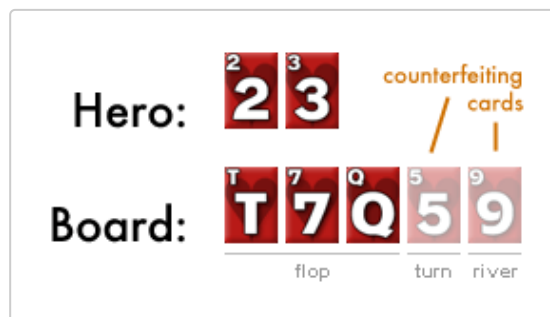
Note: I won't go in to too much detail with these, as I'm sure that you'll be able to see what's going on and understand why the "counterfeit cards" are not good for our overall expectation.

i) Full house counterfeiting.



Any player with a card higher than a 3 will beat your hand due to them having 4-of-a-kind with a better kicker.

ii) Flush counterfeiting.



1. **On the turn**, any player with a heart (the suit, not the organ) will now beat your 3-high flush.
2. **On the river**, any player with a heart still beats your flush, but you now split the pot with players that do not even have a heart.

Why is it good to know about counterfeiting in Texas Hold'em?

So now you know all about counterfeiting, what use is it? It's not like you can prevent it or do anything about it once it has happened.

The key thing with counterfeiting is to realise and accept what has happened, and to not let it frustrate you.

Many amateur players get attached to their hands and fail (or intentionally ignore) the fact that their hand has been counterfeited. They will continue to put more money in to the pot as if they hadn't been counterfeited, which is obviously a terrible, illogical and unprofitable thing to do.

Being counterfeited is annoying and it can even seem unfair, but you have to remember that it happens to everyone from time to time. Just learn to accept it. You either decide to deal with it or you don't, and if you don't, prepare to lose money. **Take the current strength of your hand for what it is and go from there.**

If you can keep focused when you are counterfeited you will save yourself money, and that's the best possible outcome in these inevitable situations.

Evaluation on counterfeiting in Texas Hold'em.

Counterfeiting happens in all variants of poker where community cards are dealt, most notably Omaha Hi Lo thanks to the two holecards that players are forced to use. In this article I have focused on **counterfeiting specifically in Texas Hold'em**.

There aren't many in-depth articles out there explaining counterfeiting in poker, but as usual, the [wikipedia article on this subject \(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counterfeit_\(poker\)\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counterfeit_(poker)) has a decent explanation with a few examples.

In conclusion, being counterfeited isn't something you can control or prevent, but you can control the way you play afterwards (which is the important part). Counterfeiting situations are a lot like [bad beats \(../psychology/bad-beats/\)](https://www.psychology.com/bad-beats/), so you should learn to deal with them in the same way.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](https://www.psychology.com/strategy/).

Comments

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? **Anonymous**
0 points · 4 years ago

Nice article, I've also seen a full house being counterfeited. which I think is extremely rare but something to take a note of.

Let's say you have JJ, the board rolls out J,Q,Q,Q,Q then the Q on the river will counterfeit your full house as anyone with A will win the pot

L **larskyhnau**
0 points · 11 years ago

Nice article. There is actually one more situation, which is fairly common, and that is pocket pair counterfeiting, when the board dubble-paires. If you have 88, and the board rolls out 6, 9, T, T, 9, then the 9 on the river will counterfeit your pocket pair and reduce your hand to 8 high. Before the river you were still ahead of a wide range of hands, but after the river any player holding a card higher than T has you beat with the same two pair and a better kicker.

G **Greg**
0 points · 10 years ago

Excellent additional example. Thank you Lars.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 9 years ago

I'm not exactly an expert but it seems worth mentioning that it's useful to recognize when the board might be counterfeiting another player, or when the streets to come have the potential to.

For example when you have top pair with a weak kicker on the flop and you put your opponent on a stronger top pair, an ace or board pair could counterfeit your opponent's kicker, thus improving the value of your hand.

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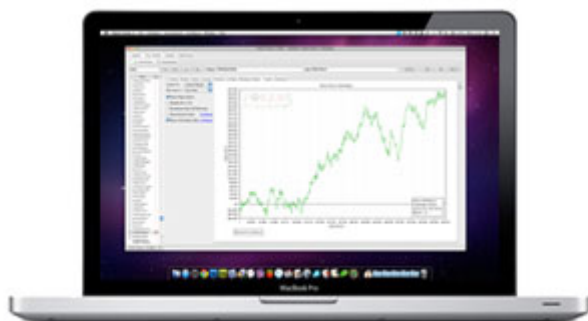


Home ▶ Strategy ▶ Other ▶ Winrate ▶

Poker Winrates

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#)

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The amount of money you win over a set period of time or hands is known as your "winrate" or "win rate" (I'm not sure if there is meant to be a gap). In poker, **winrate** is a very interesting topic for a lot of players as the higher your winrate the more money you win.

In this article I will talk about the *basics of winrates* as well as a few other topics to do with winrates in poker.



Win rate basics.

Poker winrates are most commonly expressed in the 4 following ways:

- **bb/100** = The number of big blinds you win per 100 hands.
- **bb/hour** = The number of big blinds you win per hour.
- **\$/100** = The amount of money you win per 100 hands.
- **\$/hour** = The amount of money you win per hour.

The most commonly used winrate in tracking programs and on forums for no limit Hold'em these days is **bb/100**.

PokerTracker still uses BB/100, which is twice as much as bb/100, but I'll explain that in a moment.

So if you have a winrate of 5 bb/100 in \$1/\$2 NL, you are winning \$10 (5 x \$2) for every 100 hands you play.

A few other win rates.

The following winrates are less common, but just be careful not to get them confused with the ones above.

- **BB/100** = Big Bets per 100 hands. A big bet is 2x the big blind.
- **ptbb/100** = Poker Tracker (/visit/poker-tracker/) Big Blinds per 100 hands. This is the same as BB/100.

So, if you have a winrate of 3 BB/100 or 3 ptbb/100 in a \$0.5/\$1 NL game, you would be winning 6 bb/100 or \$6 per 100 hands.

The reason why BB/100 and ptbb/100 exist is because of *limit Hold'em*. "Big bets" are double the big blind and are used on the later streets in limit Hold'em. When PokerTracker first came out it measured winrates using double the big blind for both limit and no limit games, so to save confusion the notation "ptbb/100" was used.

If you're a [SNG player \(/rooms/games/sng/\)](/rooms/games/sng/) and want to find out about "winrates" for tournament games, read my article on [poker ROI \(/../tournament/roi/\)](/../tournament/roi/).

What is a good winrate?

This is easily the most frequently asked question when it comes to win rates, and the answer is always the same...

| Any winrate above 0 is good.

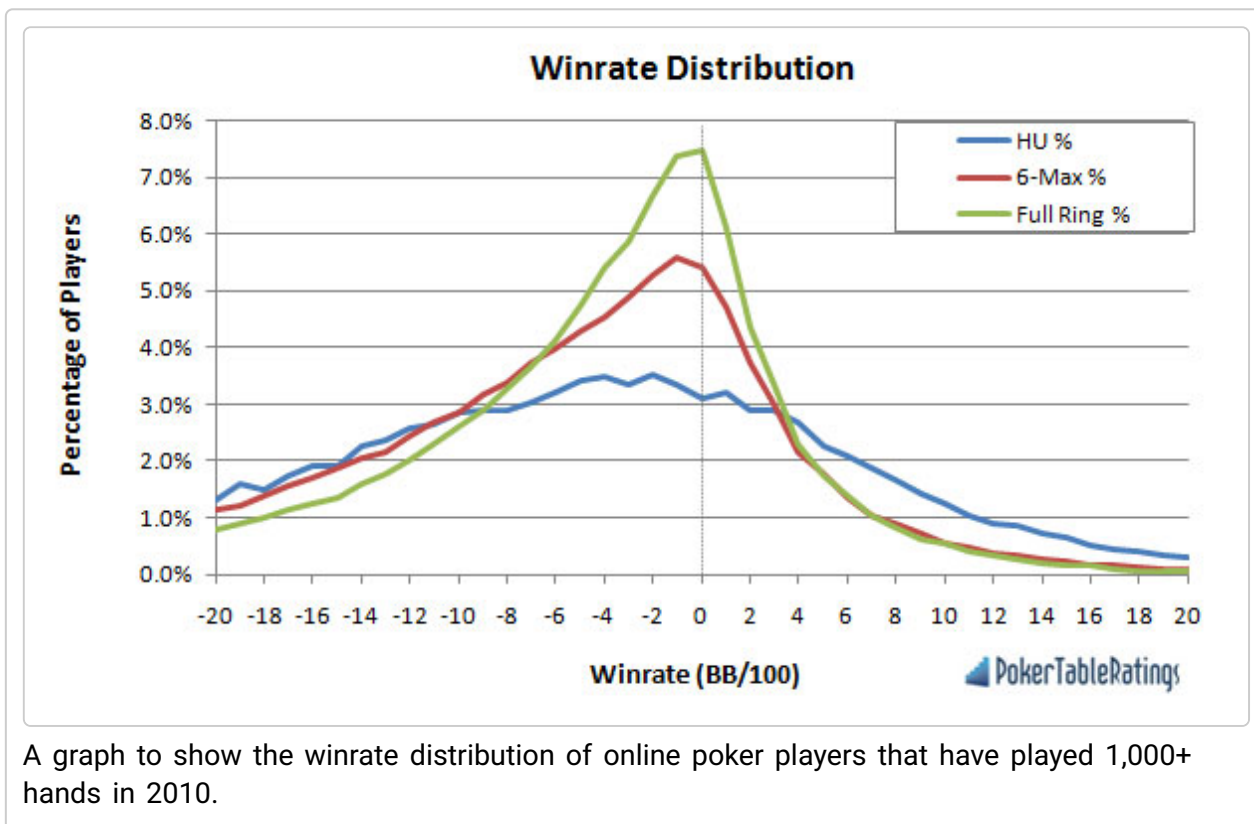
A winrate above 0 means that you are a winning player and you should be happy about that. Something crazy like 95% of all online poker players lose money, so be thankful that you're good enough to be in this elite group. However, I know that you're not going to be satisfied with a very general answer like that. You want some figures don't you?

Rough ballpark figures for good and great winrates.

- 1 – 4 bb/100 = Great. A solid winrate if you can sustain it.
- 5 – 9 bb/100 = Amazing. This is a very high winrate at any level. Consider moving up.
- 10+ bb/100 = Immense. Very, very few have a winrate like this. You probably have a small sample size though.

Once again, these are rough guidelines for good and ridiculously good winrates. If yours is much higher, then congratulations to you and I hope it remains high. At the end of the day though as anyone will tell you... you're doing a good job if your winrate is above 0bb/100, so be happy with what you've got.

Winrate distribution graph.



The graph of the distribution of player winrates above highlights a few important facts:

- The vast majority of poker players are losing poker players.
- Most winning players have a winrate of less than **4bb/100**.

Whilst winrates of 4bb/100+ are attainable, very few winning players achieve this kind of winrate compared to those that have a winrate of less than 4bb/100. So once again, even though you might have shook your head when I said that any winrate above 0bb/100 is good, this graph shows just how happy you should be to fall in to that category.

How can I work out my winrate?

The vast majority of players work out their winrate by looking at their stats in HoldemManager or PokerTracker. These programs will tell work out your winrate for you. If you're not using either one of these programs, you are missing out.

If you don't use either of these programs, then you will have a bit of trouble figuring out your winrate. However, if you do happen to have your total amount won and total number of hands played, divide each side by a number that will turn your # of hands played in to 100 and you will get your bb/100 winrate.

Seriously though, just get [Poker Tracker \(/visit/poker-tracker/\)](/visit/poker-tracker/) or [Holdem Manager \(/visit/holdem-manager/\)](/visit/holdem-manager/). See the [software \(/../tools/software/\)](/../tools/software/) page for more information.

When can I work out my winrate?

Or to put it another way, when will your win rate become accurate and converge toward your actual long-term win rate?

The short answer is it takes A LOT of hands to form anywhere near an accurate winrate. There is a lot of [variance \(/variance/\)](/variance/) in poker, so one month you might have a winrate of 9bb/100 and the next it might be 1bb/100.

As far as numbers of hands go, working out a win rate with anything less than 100k hands is prone to a lot of variance. In fact, some would say your winrate wouldn't be close to accurate unless you hit the 1 million hands mark.

Either way, you shouldn't put too much stock in to your current winrate unless you have a ridiculous number of hands to work with. If you've only clocked up 10k hands, expect to see a lot of change.

Working out hourly, daily, weekly etc. win rates.

So far we've just worked with bb/100, which obviously isn't going to be half as interesting as figuring out your hourly "wage" from poker.

To work out winrates in terms of time, we need to have a rough idea of how many hands we play in an hour. The rough figures for cash games are as follows:

Average hands per hour for cash games.

- 60 hands/hour for full ring games.
 - 85 hands/hour for short-handed games.
-

So to work out our **\$/hour**, we:

- Turn our bb/100 in to a \$/100 winrate by multiplying our winrate by the big blind.
- Multiply this by the number of tables you play at a time (if you [multi-table \(/../general/multi-tabling/\)](/../general/multi-tabling/)).

- Multiply our \$/X hands by 0.85 or 0.60 (this turns \$/X hands in to \$/hour) depending on which game we play.
- ...and we will be left with our hourly winrate. Easy.

To get your daily, weekly, monthly win rate and so on, you just multiply your hourly winrate by the hours you expect to play in a day, week, month and so on.

We could both do with a few examples though couldn't we...

Hourly winrate example.

You play 4 tables of 6-max 10c/25c NL Hold'em and have a winrate of 6 bb/100 hands. What is your hourly winrate?

- 6 bb/100 = \$1.50 (6 x 25c) per 100 hands at each table.
- \$1.50 per 100 hands x 4 tables = \$6 per 400 hands.
- \$6 x 0.85 = \$5.10 an hour.
 - *(We play 85 hands an hour on average in short-handed games, so we multiply \$6 by 0.85 to get our hourly winrate)*
- **\$/hour = \$5.10**

Daily winrate example.

You play 1 table of full ring \$1/\$2 NL Hold'em and have a win rate of 2 bb/100 hands. You play an average of 3 hours a day. What is your daily win rate?

- 2 bb/100 = \$4 per 100 hands.
- \$4 per 100 hands x 1 table = \$4 (obviously).
- \$4 x 0.60 = \$2.40 an hour.
 - *(We play 60 hands an hour on average in full ring games)*
- \$2.40 x 3 hours a day = \$7.20 a day.
- **\$/day = \$7.20**

Monthly winrate example.

You play 2 tables of short handed \$2/\$4 NL Hold'em and have a win rate of 3 bb/100 hands. You play an average of 5 hours a day and play 5 days a week. What is your monthly winrate?

- 3 bb/100 = \$12 per 100 hands at each table.

- $\$12 \times 2 \text{ tables} = \$24 \text{ per } 200 \text{ hands.}$
- $\$24 \times 0.85 = \20.40 an hour.
- $\$20.40 \times 5 \text{ hours a day} = \102 a day.
- $\$102 \text{ a day} \times \sim 20 \text{ days a month} = \$2,040 \text{ a month.}$
- **$\$/\text{month} = \$2,040$**

For more on potential earnings, read the article on [how much money you can win from online poker](http://pokerstrategy.com/articles/questions/how-much-win/) ([../../articles/questions/how-much-win/](http://pokerstrategy.com/articles/questions/how-much-win/)).

Evaluation of win rates in poker.

Aside from being able to work out hourly winrates and so on, there are two main things that I would like for you to take from this article.

1. A winrate greater than 0 is good. Be genuinely happy about it.
2. Focus on improving your game, not your win rate.

Don't ever fall in to the trap of trying to chase after a certain winrate. There are so many variables involved that it might not even be attainable for you, but don't worry about it. If you focus on playing the best possible game you can, your winrate will be as good as it needs to be.

Note: When playing from the blinds, it's actually perfectly standard to have a *negative winrate*. As outlined in this [video on blind play](http://pokerstrategy.com/videos/splitsuit/blind-leakage/) ([../../videos/splitsuit/blind-leakage/](http://pokerstrategy.com/videos/splitsuit/blind-leakage/)), it's expected to be making a loss from playing in the small blind and big blind.

Winrates in poker are fun to look at (if you're winning of course, they're not so much fun if you're losing), but always aim for perfect play, not a specific winrate.

Related articles.

- [Breaking Down Your Winrate](http://pokerstrategy.com/videos/wilcox/articles/breaking-down-your-winrate/) ([/videos/wilcox/articles/breaking-down-your-winrate/](http://pokerstrategy.com/videos/wilcox/articles/breaking-down-your-winrate/)).

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy](http://pokerstrategy.com/strategy/) ([/strategy/](http://pokerstrategy.com/strategy/)).

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? **Anonymous**

0 points · 9 years ago

32000 hands played...32% of total hands won. is that good?

C **Christos Ganoglou**

0 points · 8 years ago

To be accurate you need a sample of close to 1.000.000

R **Rabum Al Lal**

0 points · 8 years ago

Quite good.

E **Elijah Cross**

0 points · 5 years ago

Heads up - that poker table ratings link is infected.

G **Greg Walker** MODERATOR

0 points · 3 years ago

Thanks, fixed.

? **Anonymous**

0 points · 9 years ago

Messed up math? 3, not 6 in first example of 3 BB/100...



Anonymous

0 points · 9 years ago

6 is correct



Charly Autumn

0 points · 8 years ago

It's simple logic!



Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

There is one site with no bonus or rakeback (2.5% rake) and 5 tables max. Belive me, you can have a crazy bb/100 on that site. :)



Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

gud arty



Jeremiah

0 points · 9 years ago

I think you are reading your statistics wrong. Looking at the winrate graph, you calculate the total percentage of winning players by finding the area underneath the line on the positive side of the graph. The area underneath the line on both the positive and negative sides of the graph, when added together, should equal 100%. I'm no fancy city statistician, but it looks to me like a little under 50% of players are winning players and a little under 50% are loosing players. I could be misunderstanding something though.



Anonymous

0 points · 9 years ago

seems legit to me - besides rake its a zero sum game after all...



Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

talk about hooking people in. Examples of hourly and daily win rates are very low. Then an example of monthly is a decent non taxable income. Classic.

G

Greg

0 points · 11 years ago

Ha yeah you're right. I promise that wasn't intentional though.

C

Carl Petro

0 points · 8 years ago

I am guessing if you win 66% of the hands you actually contest you should be profitable ?
example hands won 200.....hands lost 100
folds 60

PS with NEW JERSEY ONLINE Poker regulated does that mean its NOT cheat central like many of the old sites use to be

?

Anonymous

0 points · 8 years ago

this is the most rubbish I have read. It all depends on where you play and how well you know your opponents. I've been playing for 3 years now and my win rate is about 35bb/100. There are days I walk in with \$100 and leave with between \$400 and \$1200. This happens at least 4 out of 10 times. I do lose on certain days but never buy in for a lot and never go all-in (risk my entire stack) unless I have the nuts (you can always wait for a better hand so why risk calling??? - i never understand why people do this)
. So my losses are limited to a small part of my pool. (Cash games only)

C

Christos Ganoglou

0 points · 8 years ago

i was about to say exactly the same ...in Greece my win rate is 2Buy ins per 3 hour session...Germany Berlin 6 to 8 buy ins per 3 hour session!!!!!!UK London 4 to 5 buy ins per session and there is a small place in a Greek Island were my win rate is almost 1 buy in per 3 hour session or even less...PokerStars 1/2NL 12.6BB per 100hands FullTilt 1/2 6BB per 100hands

C

Carl Petro

0 points · 8 years ago

what does bb stand for is 35bb/100 the same as a 35% win rate ?

if you played a 2 table tourney that paid out to 3rd if being 1st 2nd or 3rd 35% of the time good enough to be profitable ?

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You need to get some bitcoin (/bitcoin/) to play here, but it's worth it.

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Home ▶ Strategy ▶ Other ▶ Player Notes ▶

Taking Player Notes Tips

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

Whenever you play poker, it is always important to try and be aware of your opponents' actions, and what their particular style of play ([/strategy/general/playing-styles/](#)) may be. Especially so in the game of Texas Holdem ([/](#)), it is vital that you are able to play your opponent and not just your own cards.



Therefore **you should always try and take into account how your opponent plays to help influence every decision you make to help you choose the most profitable action possible**. A simple yet effective way of remembering an opponent's style of play for key moments is **taking notes** on them from past experiences at the table.

Advantages of taking player notes.

Most online poker rooms will offer you the feature of being able to assign notes to individual players at the table. Some rooms will even allow you to tag players with different symbols or colours to help identify them from other players at the table.

The Full-Tilt Poker room has a particularly good player notes feature, as it offers you the ability to tag a colour to your opponents as well as take notes. This particular feature is incredibly useful, and to be honest I don't think I could see myself playing at any room that did not have the note-taking option available.

By *taking notes on your opponents* you can quickly find out information on players who you have played against before, but have since forgotten from the last time you were at the table with them. I do believe that it is important to try and keep your notes on your opponents as simple as possible, and to be frank, I don't want to bring up the note box and have to decipher lines of code every time I want to find out some basic info on the other players at the table.

Keep your player notes simple and understandable. There's no need to write in a cryptic code.

So even though I want to be fully briefed on my opponents, I want to keep the notes simple and straightforward. But what exactly should you be taking notes of on your opponents?

Key poker player notes.

Style of play.

I feel a good place to start off is to try and determine what my opponent's particular style of play is. I want to try and find out whether or not they are:

- Tight-Aggressive.
- Tight-Passive.
- Loose-Aggressive.
- or Loose-Passive.

This can be done by watching the way they play their hands. This is because this information can be very important for where you might be forced into a difficult call or fold situation.

For example, if I have a decent hand and I am facing a large bet from my opponent, I am more likely to call if I know my opponent is Loose-Aggressive rather than Tight-Aggressive. Therefore I will usually shorten these tags down to TA, TP, LA and LP and stick them at the top of the note box for quick reference when I want some info on my opponents.

Other key information.

After taking note of a particular player's style of play, I want to make a few little key notes on other aspects of their game. Below is a list of a few of the most important things I am looking for when watching my opponents play:

- Do they pay too much for draws?
- Do they bet draws?
- Do they make continuation bets ([../../plays/continuation-bet/](#))?
- Do they make float plays ([../../plays/float/](#))?
- Do they over-value top pair?
- Are they a calling station?

These in my opinion are the most important and profitable factors of my opponent's game that I want to be aware of. There are going to be numerous tidbits that I can pick up on and note down, but **the 5 points above are the ones that are going to help me the most**. This is because knowing these points will help me in a multitude of common situations in the game.

For example, if I know my opponent over-values top pair, I am going to bet like crazy when I am holding a monster (</videos/splitsuit/flopped-monsters/>) rather than try and slow play and sucker them in. Furthermore, If I know my opponent pays too much with drawing hands (</../hands/drawing/>), I am going to bet big when they are drawing to make them pay dearly and help them make bigger and bigger mistakes by calling.

Player notes example.



As you can see, the notes are **simple and effective**, as they allow me to quickly see what my opponent is like without having to try and figure out different short-handed codes I have for each player. I don't often use the coloured tags for my opponents if they are available, as I feel that the majority of key info will be kept within my notes. However, I will sometimes use 2 colours like green and red to help signify a very weak player and a very strong player.

Use the colour tags to your advantage, but don't feel obliged to have to use all the different colours available. Keep it simple.

Taking player notes evaluation.

The style of note taking as described above is the one that works best for me, so you may find that an alternative method may work better for you. However, I like to think that the above method is a good foundation for note taking and should help you take down key info on your opponents if you are new to using the note-taking feature.

But you should remember that notes should build up from a few hours of play with your opponents, as it is not easy to build up an accurate picture from a mere few minutes or hands at the table. However, when you do take player notes, just stick with something **simple and easy to**

understand.

If you have a certain note-taking method that you find very useful and would like to share with other readers, feel free to send me an email at [greg\[at\]thepokerbank\[dot\]com](mailto:greg[at]thepokerbank[dot]com) and I will post it up for other visitors to see.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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B

Brad Cline

0 points · 7 years ago

Great advice. I play live and often take notes on players in my phone. Rarely I see someone using a notepad, but that looks a bit conspicuous. Everyone thinks I'm just texting my friends when I use my phone. Any tips for taking notes live?

T

Tomáš

0 points · 4 years ago

there is note: pays too much for draws. What is too much? Thanks :)

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Hand Combinations (Combinatorics)

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

For a great training video on poker combinatorics, check out this [poker combos video \(/videos/splitsuit/combos/\)](#).

"Combinatorics" is a big word for something that isn't all that difficult to understand. In this article, I will go through the basics of working out **hand combinations** or "combos" in poker and give a few examples to help show you why it is useful.

Oh, and as you've probably noticed, "combinatorics", "hand combinations" and "combos" refer to the same thing in poker. Don't get confused if I use them interchangeably, which I probably will.



What is poker combinatorics?

Poker combinatorics involves working out how many different combinations of a hand exists in a certain situation.

For example:

- How many ways can you be dealt AK?
- How many ways can you be dealt 66?
- How combinations of T9 are there on a flop of T32?
- How many straight draw combinations are there on a flop of AT7?

Using *combinatorics*, you will be able to quickly work these numbers out and use them to help you make better decisions based on the probability of certain hands showing up.

Poker starting hand combinations basics.

- **Any two** (e.g. AK or T5) = **16 combinations**
- **Pairs** (e.g. AA or TT) = **6 combinations**

If you were take a hand like AK and write down all the possible ways you could be dealt this hand from a deck of cards (e.g. A♠ K♥, A♠ K♦, A♠ K♣ etc.), you would find that there are **16** possible combinations.

See all 16 AK hand combinations:

Similarly, if you wrote down all the possible combinations of a pocket pair like JJ (e.g. J♠J♥, J♠J♦, J♠J♣ etc.), you would find that there are just **6** possible combinations.

See all 6 JJ pocket pair hand combinations:

So as you can see from these basic [starting hand \(/strategy/basic/starting-hand-selection/\)](/strategy/basic/starting-hand-selection/) combinations in poker, you're almost 3 times as likely to be dealt a non-paired hand like AK than a paired hand. That's pretty interesting in itself, but you can do a lot more than this...

Note: two extra starting hand combinations.

Fact: There are 1,326 combinations of starting hands in [Texas Hold'em \(/\)](#) in total.

Working out hand combinations using "known" cards.

Let's say we hold KQ on a flop of KT4 (suits do not matter). How many possible combinations of AK and TT are out there that our opponent could hold?

Unpaired hands (e.g. AK).

$$C = A_1 \times A_2$$

C = total combinations

A₁ = available cards for the first card

A₂ = available cards for the second card

How to work out the total number of hand combinations for an unpaired hand like AK, JT, or Q3.

Method: Multiply the numbers of available cards for each of the two cards.

Word equation: (1st card available cards) x (2nd card available cards) = total combinations

Example.

If we hold KQ on a KT4 flop, how many possible combinations of AK are there?

There are 4 Aces and 2 Kings (*4 minus the 1 on the flop and minus the 1 in our hand*) available in the deck.

$$C = A_1 * A_2$$

$$C = 4 \times 2$$

$$C = 8$$

C = 8, so there are **8 possible combinations** of AK if we hold KQ on a flop of KT4.

Paired hands (e.g. TT).

$$C = \frac{A \times (A - 1)}{2}$$

C = total combinations
A = available cards

How to work out the total number of hand combinations for an paired hand like AA, JJ, or 44.

Method: Multiply the number of available cards by the number of available cards minus 1, then divide by two.

Word equation: [(available cards) x (available cards - 1)] / 2 = total combinations

Example.

How many combinations of TT are there on a KT4 flop?

Well, on a flop of KT4 here are 3 Tens left in the deck, so...

$$C = [(A) * (A-1)] / 2$$

$$C = [(3) * (3-1)] / 2$$

$$C = [3 * 2] / 2$$

$$C = 3$$

C = 3, which means there are **3 possible combinations** of TT.

Thoughts on working out hand combinations.

Working out the number of possible combinations of unpaired hands is easy enough; **just multiply the two numbers of available cards.**

Working out the combinations for paired hands looks awkward at first, but it's not that tricky when you actually try it out. Just **find the number of available cards, take 1 away from that number, multiply those two numbers together then half it.**

Note: You'll also notice that this method works for working out the preflop starting hand combinations mentioned earlier on. For example, if you're working out the number of AK combinations as a starting hand, there are 4 Aces and 4 Kings available, so $4 \times 4 = 16$ **AK combinations.**

Why is combinatorics useful?

Because by working out hand combinations, you can find out more useful information about a player's [range \(/strategy/concepts/rem/range/\)](/strategy/concepts/rem/range/).

For example, let's say that an opponents [3betting \(/strategy/plays/3bet/\)](/strategy/plays/3bet/) range is roughly 2%. This means that they are only ever 3betting AA, KK and AK. That's a very tight range indeed.

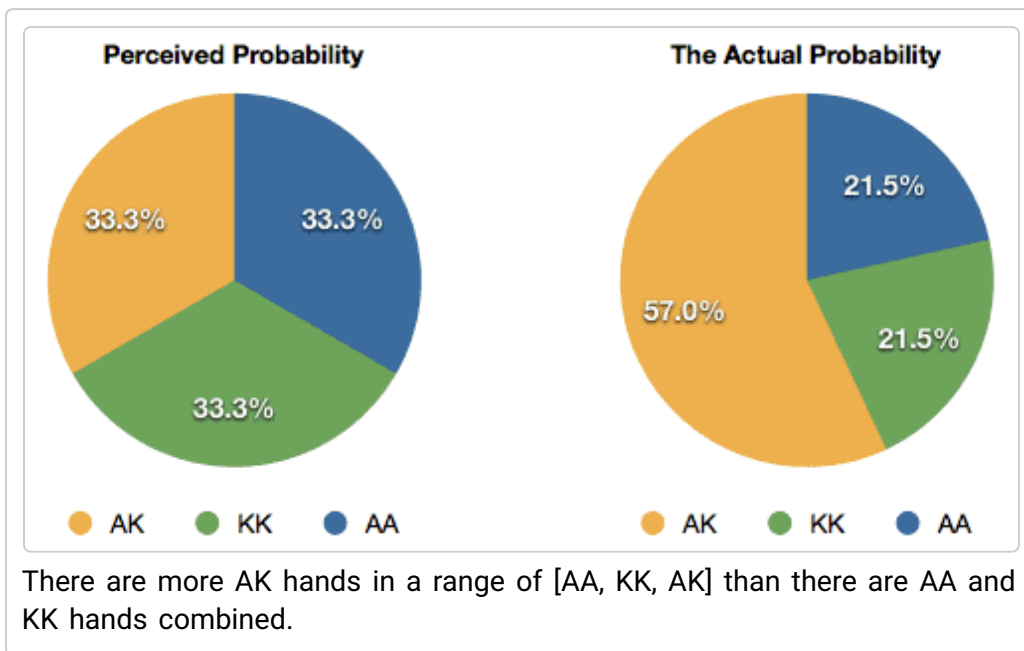
Now, just looking at this range of hands you might think that whenever this player 3bets, they are more likely to have a big pocket pair. After all, both AA and KK are in his range, compared to the single unpaired hand of AK. So without considering combinatorics for this 2% range, you might think that the probability break-up of each hand looks like this:

- AA = 33%
- KK = 33%
- AK = 33%

...with the two big pairs making up the majority of this 2% 3betting range (roughly 66% in total).

However, let's look at these hands by comparing the total combinations for each hand:

- AA = 6 combinations (21.5%)
- KK = 6 combinations (21.5%)
- AK = 16 combinations (57%)



So out of 28 possible combinations made up from AA, KK and AK, 16 of them come from AK. This means that when our opponent 3bets, **the majority of the time he is holding AK and not a big pocket pair.**

Now obviously if you're holding a hand like 75o this is hardly comforting. However, **the point is that it's useful to realise that the probabilities of certain types of hands in a range will vary.** Just because a player either has AA or AK, it doesn't mean that they're both equally probable holdings - they will actually be holding AK more often than not.

Analogy: If a fruit bowl contains 100 oranges, 1 apple, 1 pear and 1 grape, there is a decent range of fruit (the "hands"). However, the the fruits are heavily weighted toward oranges, so there is a greater chance of randomly selecting an orange from the bowl than any of the 3 other possible fruits ("AK" in the example above).

This same method applies when you're trying to work out the probabilities of a range of possible made hands on the flop by looking at the number of hand combinations. For example, if your opponent could have either a straight draw or a set, which of the two is more likely?

Poker combinatorics example hand.

You have 66 on a board of A♠ J♥ 6♦ 8♦ 2♣. The pot is \$12 and you bet \$10. Your opponent moves all in for \$60, which means you have to call \$50 to win a pot of \$82.

You are confident that your opponent either has *a set or two pair with an Ace* (i.e. AJ, A8, A6 or A2). Don't worry about how you know this or why you're in this situation, you just are.

According to [pot odds \(/strategy/mathematics/pot-odds/\)](/strategy/mathematics/pot-odds/), you need to have **at least a 38% chance of having the best hand to call**. You can now use combinatorics / hand combinations here to help you decide whether or not to call.

Poker combinatorics example hand solution.

First of all, let's split our opponent's hands in to *hands you beat* and *hands you don't beat*, working out the number of hand combinations for each.

Hands you beat.

$$AJ = 3 \times 3 = 9 \text{ combinations}$$

$$A8 = 3 \times 3 = 9 \text{ combinations}$$

$$A6 = 3 \times 1 = 3 \text{ combinations}$$

$$A2 = 3 \times 3 = 9 \text{ combinations}$$

$$22 = (3 \times 2) / 2 = 3 \text{ combinations}$$

Hands you don't beat.

$$AA = (3 \times 2) / 2 = 3 \text{ combinations}$$

$$JJ = (3 \times 2) / 2 = 3 \text{ combinations}$$

$$88 = (3 \times 2) / 2 = 3 \text{ combinations}$$

Adding them all up...

$$\text{Total combinations} = 42$$

$$\text{Combinations you beat} = 33 \text{ (79\%)}$$

$$\text{Combinations you don't beat} = 9 \text{ (21\%)}$$

Seeing as you have the best hand 79% of the time (or 79% "[equity \(/strategy/mathematics/equity/\)](/strategy/mathematics/equity/)") and the pot odds indicate that you only need to have the best hand 38% of the time, it makes it [+EV \(/strategy/mathematics/expected-value/\)](/strategy/mathematics/expected-value/) to call.

So whereas you might have initially thought that the number of hands we beat compared to the number of hands we didn't beat was close to 50/50 (making it likely -EV to call), after looking at the hand combinations we can see that it is actually much closer to 80/20, making calling a profitable play.

Being able to assign a range to your opponent is good, but understanding the different likelihoods of the hands within that range is better.

Poker combinatorics conclusion.

Working out hand combinations in poker is simple:

- **Unpaired hands:** Multiply the number of available cards. (e.g. AK on an AT2 flop = $[3 \times 4] = 12$ AK combinations).
- **Paired hands:** Find the number of available cards. Take 1 away from that number, multiply those two numbers together and divide by 2. (e.g. TT on a AT2 flop = $[3 \times 2] / 2 = 3$ TT combinations).

By working out hand combinations you can gain a much better understanding about opponent's hand ranges (</strategy/general/putting-players-on-hands/>). If you only ever deal in ranges and ignore hand combinations, you are missing out on useful information.

It's unrealistic to think that you're going to work out all these hand combinations on the fly whilst you're sat at the table. However, a lot of value comes from simply familiarizing yourself with the varying probabilities of different types of hands for future reference.

For example, after a while you'll start to realise that straight draws are a lot more common than you think, and that flush draws are far less common than you think. Insights like these will help you when you're faced with similar decisions in the future.

The next time you're doing some post session analysis, spend some time thinking about combinatorics and noting down what you find.

Poker combinatorics further reading.

Hand combinations in poker all stem from statistics. So if you're interested in finding out more about the math side of things, here are a few links that I found helpful:

- Combinations video - Youtube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bCxMhncR7PU>). (all the stuff on this channel is awesome)
- Permutations and Combinations - MathForum.org (<http://mathforum.org/dr.math/faq/faq.comb.perm.html>).

If you're more interested in finding out more about combinations in poker only, here are a few interesting reads:

- [How To Do Combinatorics In Poker - YouTube \(by nitreg.com\)](#)
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4BL8nwcLW8>).
- [COTW: Thinking About Combos - 2+2](#) (<https://forumserver.twoplustwo.com/78/micro-small-stakes-full-ring/cotw-thinking-about-combos-885172/>).

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy](#) (</strategy/>).

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M **Mehrban Iranshad**
0 points · 6 years ago

Even though this was written a while ago, this article is fantastic. Thanks for the very helpful information! I was looking for help on combinatorics and found what I needed plus additional resources. Much appreciated!

G **Greg**
0 points · 3 years ago

My pleasure!

S **Sivalingam Canjeevaram**
0 points · 5 years ago

JsJc (Black BBlack)

JhJd (Red Red)

JsJh (Black Red)

JsJd (Black Red)

JcJh (Black Red)

JcJd (Black Red)

Ok, The article is correct. (Fish..?)



Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

I might I have missed something but it says pot odds determined we had to be good there 38%, where did we get the 38% from? Thank you and look forward to your reply.



Greg

0 points · 12 years ago

Yeah sorry I brushed passed that part rather quickly.

To work out % pot odds you add your own call to the total pot size, and divide your call amount by that. So the pot size is \$83 and we have to call \$50...

Pot Odds = Call / (Pot + Call)

Pot Odds = 50 / (83 + 50)

Pot Odds = 0.3759 = 38%



Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

Thanks a lot, but now I've thought of another problem, I know that everyone uses this method but why do we keep adding the Ace over and over in different combination, shouldn't we be adding it only once? AJ, A6, A2, all equal to 27, but that's because we kept multiplying the Ace. Maybe I'm over thinking this. By the way, this an excellent in depth way of determining your equity in the hand making decisions, why is this article only rated 5/10? shouldn't it be 10/10? Great article and look forward to your reply and help. Thx.



Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

Combinatorics well explained.

Great job.

Thanks.



Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

In the example of Pairs of Jacks there is two Jacks of Spades as one hand??? Am I not understanding something?? You can't have two Jacks of Spades in one hand.

G **Greg**
0 points · 13 years ago

Ha yeah, silly mistake by me there. Thanks for pointing it out -- I've updated the example image so that it lists the 6 actual possible combinations of pocket pairs.

Sorry about that.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 13 years ago

hi mate great article just one small question. in regards to calculating the paired hands such as the TT with an AT2 flop. i dont understand the point in multiplying by 2 then dividing by 2 as they obviously cancel eachother. so in any situation where calculating the combinations of a set the result is always three combinations, is it not?

G **Greg**
0 points · 13 years ago

Yeah, if you're just finding the combination of sets, the total number of combinations is always 3. So as you noticed, the multiplying and then dividing by 2 do cancel each other out.

The thing is, the equation has to fit for all situations. For example, how many combinations of TT are there before the flop?

$$C = (4 \times 3) / 2 = 6$$

Or, how many combinations of TT are there on a TT2 flop?

$$C = (2 \times 1) / 2 = 1$$

As you can see, this rule works for everything. The trade-off is that you happen to multiply and divide by the same number in two situations.

As you familiarise yourself with combos you won't have to keep running through the equation -- you'll just remember that there are 3 combos of sets for a paired hand and so on. Just like the way you've memorised the odds of hitting flushes, straights etc.

But at the end of the day, that equation will always return the correct result if you ever forget the different pair combos off by heart. Let me know if I didn't explain that very well, or if you're still a little unsure.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

Hi Greg,

Great article, and very well written. However, I believe you made a small mistake: "Your opponent moves all in for \$60, which means you have to call \$50 to win a pot of \$82According to pot odds, you need to have at least a 61% chance of having the best hand to call." The pot would be \$82 + \$50 you are calling to make a

total pot of \$132. So, in fact, you are calling \$50 to win \$132. You need only have a 38% chance of having the best hand to call. ($50/132 = 38\%$) I learned that in your pot odds link. :)

G **Greg**
0 points · 12 years ago

Excellent spot G13!

Silly mistake by me there. As you know I made the schoolboy error of not adding my own potential call to the current pot size when working out % pot odds. Good eyes haha.

I've updated the article. Thanks!

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 13 years ago

Hi Greg,

Thanks, very clear and helpful, I learned something today :O)

Humm in the "Hands you beat" for A&6

• $A6 = 3 \times 2 = 6$ combinations

maybe I am missing something but should it read -

• $A6 = 3 \times 1 = 3$ combinations

since I have two 6s and one came on the flop, there is only one left in the deck??

G **Greg**
0 points · 13 years ago

Ah yes overlooked that. I've definitely had better days when it comes to proofreading. Thanks Gerard!

L **line**
0 points · 9 years ago

You said: "So whereas you might have initially thought that the number of hands we beat compared to the number of hands we didn't beat was close to 50/50 (making it likely -EV to call)..." which is wrong because 50% equity is more than enough since u only need 38% to have +EV

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

this is a dream.....thanks.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

How did you make the 33 equal 79% and the 9 equal 21%, thank you.

G

Greg

0 points · 12 years ago

There are 42 combos of hands in total, and 33 of those we beat (leaving 9 left over that we do not beat).

To work out what percentage a smaller number is of a bigger number, you divide the small one by the big one, then multiply by 100. So:

$$(33/42) * 100 = 79\%$$

$$(9/42) * 100 = 21\%$$

J

Jordan Harding

0 points · 12 years ago

This post was fantastic! Definitely the most clearly written article I've found on the subject.

Great Job!

G

Greg

0 points · 12 years ago

Thanks Jordan, I really appreciate that.

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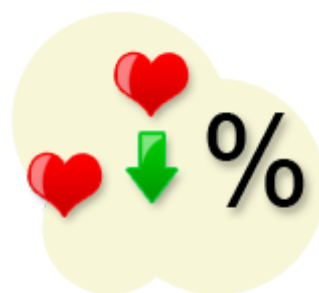
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Poker Equity and Drawing Hands

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

In my article on [poker equity \(/strategy/mathematics/equity/\)](#), I discussed how you should be betting for value to maximize your winnings when you feel you have the best hand. Normally, if you hold the best hand at one stage during the hand, it is typical that your hand stands the best chance of winning after all the cards have been dealt.



However, in some situations it is possible to hold an unmade hand like a draw, but still have the best chance of winning. Therefore in these situations you will have high equity in the pot, and it will make sense to bet for value even if your hand is not yet complete.

Drawing hand equity example 1.

You hold $Q\spadesuit J\spadesuit$ on a flop of $T\spadesuit 9\spadesuit 4\heartsuit$.

If your opponent is betting heavily into you it is probable that do not hold the best hand, but nonetheless, **you will have the most equity almost regardless of what you opponent holds.**

Even if you know that you opponent has a strong hand like two pair with $9\heartsuit 4\spadesuit$, your equity in the pot will be 52% despite the fact your opponent is the one with the made hand. The only hand that would have more equity in the pot than you at the time would be a set, but even in that particular situation you wouldn't be too far behind.

It is perfectly possible for strong drawing hands to have more equity than already made hands (like a pair).

Because you have such a monstrous drawing hand (</strategy/hands/drawing/>), there are a wide variety of cards that could help you to make a better hand than your opponent, such as a flush or a straight. Therefore you should bet for value even with a drawing hand in this situation, and look to get as much money into the pot as possible at this point.

Drawing hand equity example 2.

Now let's assume that in a similar hand where we hold Q♦ J♦ on a flop of T♦ 9♦ 4♠, there are now *two players* in the pot instead of one.

We know for a fact that Alice holds 9♠ 4♦, and Bob holds T♣ T♥. If we run these hands through an odds calculator, it shows that we are no longer the favorite to win the hand.

The following is the equity each player has in the hand:

	Hand	Equity
Hero	Q♦ J♦	45%
Alice	9♠ 4♦	1%
Bob	T♣ T♥	54%

We can see that Bob with his set of Tens is currently in the lead, and is most likely to win the pot after the turn and river cards have been dealt. So, seeing as we are not favorite to win, should we check and fold to avoid putting in money with the hand that has the worst potential to win?

Not necessarily, as the presence of the third player in the hand is making a big difference to our chances of making money from this hand in the long run.

(This is where it gets a little mathsy...)

A little math.

If we all continue with our hands and continue to build the pot, each player will have invested money to create 1/3 of the final pot, or 33%. However, our equity in the pot is 45%, so we would be **investing 33% to get on average a return of 45%**. Therefore as you can see, if all 3 players move all in at this point we will be getting a good return on our money.

The fact that we are not favorite to win the hand is irrelevant, because **our equity and odds from all 3 players moving in on the flop means that we will be winning money in the long run**. If our percentage equity is greater than the percentage of the pot we have invested money in, we will be

making a profitable play. Which in essence, is the same principle as [pot odds](/strategy/mathematics/pot-odds/) (</strategy/mathematics/pot-odds/>).

What happens to our equity if one player folds?

The only problem that could arise at this point in the hand is if Alice (9♠ 4♦) folds their hand without putting any chips into the pot. This would result in us now investing closer to 50% to the pot with only 45% equity. Therefore it would be a slightly losing play to move all in unless our opponent is giving us the correct pot odds to continue with the hand to try and complete our draw.

Drawing hand equity evaluation.

These two examples appear to be very confusing and mathematical, but you are not expected to be able to work out these figures and percentages whilst sitting down at the table. The above examples are merely shown to highlight the fact that **you do not always need the current best hand to have good equity in the pot.**

If you ever hold a monster of a draw like an open-ended straight and flush draw, it is likely that you will have very good equity in the pot and should be looking to invest as much as possible into it.

Both of these examples work very closely with [pot odds](/strategy/mathematics/pot-odds/) (</strategy/mathematics/pot-odds/>) to help determine whether or not you should call in certain situations. Therefore if you would like to know whether or not you should be folding, calling or raising in the above examples, you should take a look at the article on pot odds.

As a general rule, if you have more equity in the pot than you are going to invest in it, then you should be looking to bet and raise as much as possible.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy](/strategy/) (</strategy/>).

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Lenticular Printing

0 points · 11 years ago

I was very pleased to find this site.

L

larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

And in top of that comes fold equity, if you choose to play your strong draw aggressively instead of just checking and waiting, until you have made a hand. Its unlikely of course, that someone will fold a set or two pair on the flop. But if our oppenent in the example have a hand like pocket 8`s, he might be willing to fold that to a raise. And because pocket 8`s has about 35% equity in the pot and the drawing hand 65% equity, this fold will generate a lot of value for the drawing hand. If the pot is 10\$, the drawing hand will win 10\$ by raising, while it would on average only win 6,5\$ by checking disregarding whatever implied odds there might be on future betting rounds for either player. So a raise and fold on the flop will generate on average 3,5\$ value (35% of pot size) for the drawing hand in that situation.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

fold equity here is not why u should bet u should bet because u have a monster draw
r we playing limit or no limti
what is the bet size?????
pair of 88 can call up to a pot size bet in this situation he has 37% equity in pot
folding would be a mistake in fact 88 should raise u and u should shove allin
back then
the 88 should fold
u guy always now what the cards are in these examples
in real world u dont
with the suited QJ in this situation is a no brainer
bet until u run out of chips



Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

"Drawing hand equity example 2"...

This is not very helpfull for tournament play. In that regardless of the pot you stand to win if you hit your flush on the river and if the board doesnt pair for the player with a set of 10s on the flop, equity in this scenario has to be relative to your stack size and tornament life. For example any player worth his salt who hits a set on the flop will bet enough to protect its value against posible draws.. so at this point pre turn you will have a big decision; judging by the bet size or possible 3xbet action (pot odds) you now have to act according to your own stack size. If you have an above average or large stack you can call fearlessly given the pot equity (posible positive outcome due to having a good amount of outs:) !

If on the other hand you have an average to below average stack and calling the bet will have you pot committed with your tournament life on the line. This play is not advisable.

On the other hand if you find yourself very short stacked with a flush and up and down staright draw (if somehow you get to see a flop without having already shoved!!) then ofcourse it is wize to shove with your draw/s.

In cash games for professional players with the three way pot and those outs/ odds/ equity etc over time (your professional career) to call will be eventually profitable.

I dont like cash games for that reason..to me its more robotic and less human.. fight for your life, the crown and the glory !!! (no reload available) !! lol

#NR NA

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G Bucks

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

Imaginary Money: [Sklansky Dollars \(/strategy/mathematics/sklansky-dollars/\)](#) : G-Bucks

"G-bucks" (Galfond Dollars, Gbucks, G Bucks) is a very important concept that expands upon the concept of [Sklansky Dollars \(/strategy/mathematics/sklansky-dollars/\)](#) when evaluating the expected value (/strategy/mathematics/expected-value/) of tough decisions in no limit Hold'em.



The term "G-bucks" was coined by Phil Galfond (OMGClayAiken) in his article on [conceptualizing money matters \(https://www.espn.com/espn/poker/columns/story?columnist=bluff_magazine&id=2817110\)](https://www.espn.com/espn/poker/columns/story?columnist=bluff_magazine&id=2817110). It's a great article, but it's also a very long-winded one. In this article I will attempt to condense the theory behind G bucks in to an easier to digest morsel of delicious Hold'em strategy. Tasty stuff.

What are G bucks?

G Bucks tell you how much money you would have won/lost when you compare the equity of one hand against a range of hands.

Remember Sklansky dollars? If not, Sklansky dollars basically tell you how much money you win from a hand vs. another in the long run. So even though you might lose \$10 going all-in with AA against KK, you actually win \$16.4 from that \$20 pot on average due to Sklansky dollars. Go read up on it.

Both Sklansky dollars and G bucks tell you how much money you would have won in a certain spot. However, the difference is that:

- Sklansky dollars – 1 hand against 1 hand.
- G bucks – 1 hand against a **range of hands**.

So instead of comparing your hand and your opponent's hand, **with G bucks you compare your hand with your opponent's range of hands (</strategy/concepts/rem/range/>)**. By doing this you can then go on to more effectively work out how much money you will win or lose when calling in certain situations based on your opponent's range.

Working out G bucks.

Working out G bucks is actually really straightforward.

1. Work out an accurate **range of hands that your opponent could be holding** as best as you can.
2. Plug your hand and your opponent's range in to PokerStove to **work out your equity (</strategy/mathematics/equity/>) in the hand**.
s
3. Multiply the pot size by your % equity in the hand to work out how much money you expect to win on average.

The original article uses a more complicated method for working out the equities of a hand versus a range. However, when you have equity calculators like [PokerStove \(</tools/software/pokerstove/>\)](/tools/software/pokerstove/) at your disposal there is no need to take the longer route to the same place, especially if you're lazy.

After finding your equity against your range you just find the percentage equity of the pot that you expect to win, just like you did with Sklansky dollars. The key (and most difficult) part of the whole process is putting your opponent on an accurate range.

As I said, the concept and method for working out *G bucks* really isn't that difficult at all. Nonetheless there's no harm in dishing out a few examples to really drive the concept home.

G bucks example 1.

You're in a home cash game with a few friends, and as with any home game the majority of them are pretty bad players and/or are fairly drunk. Stacks are \$100 with blinds \$0.5/\$1.

You're in the BB with AQo. Your old friend Mike from MP pushes all in and it folds around to you. You know that Mike for whatever reason will always push all-in with any two Broadway cards and any pocket pair. He likes to gamble.



You have a think for a moment and finally decide to make the call, making the pot \$201 in total. Low and behold, Mike turns over AA as standard and the board brings no help at all, so you lose the \$201 pot. Was this a bad call given Mike's range? Surely not.

- In real money: -\$100
- In Sklansky bucks: -\$93 (worked out with AQo vs. AA in PokerStove)
- What about G bucks?

If we plug in the following in to PokerStove:

Hand ranges.

- Our hand: AQo
 - Mike's range: Any pair, any two Broadway. (22+,ATs+,KTs+,QTs+,JTs,ATo+,KTo+,QTo+,JTo)
-

Hand Distribution			Equity
Player 1		AQo	55.107%
Player 2		KTs+,QTs+,JTs,ATo+,KTo+,QTo+,JTo	44.893%

We find that our equity with AQo against Mike's pushing range is 55.1%, which obviously means that we have the edge in the long run.

So according to G bucks, we win \$110.75 from the \$201 pot on average when we call all-in with AQ against Mike when he pushes.

- Real money: -\$100
- Sklansky bucks: -\$93
- **G bucks: +\$110.75**

G bucks example 2.

You're playing \$200NL at Full Tilt and call an \$8 raise from the C.O.() with your A♠ Q♦ on the button. You know for a fact that Villain is a tight-aggressive (/guide/further/tight-aggressive/) player that bets his draws (../hands/drawing/aggression/) and rarely slowplays. However, he is not a maniac and is generally a half-decent player.

Flop: Q♥ 6♥ 7♣ - Villain bets \$12 in to the \$17 pot and you call.

Turn: 3♦ - Villain bets \$35 in to the \$41 pot and you call.

River: 3♠ - The pot is now \$111 and villain shoves in his remaining \$145. What do you do?

Well **firstly, let's give our Villain a range.** Before the flop his range is really wide due to the fact that he is an aggressive player raising from LP. Therefore his range is roughly any pair, any ace, any suited king, any suited Broadway, and a bunch of suited connectors (</videos/splitsuit/suited-connectors/>). (I used the rough guidelines for a 30% PFR (</articles/software/pfr/>)) in the range article (</concepts/rem/range/>)).

Flop: It's a standard cbet (</plays/continuation-bet/>) and we can't really narrow his range down all that much.

Turn: This is important. On this turn it is very likely that villain would check any 1-pair hands for pot control. The fact that he double barrels (</strategy/plays/double-barrel/>) this turn indicates that he either has a strong made hand like 2-pair or better or is semi-bluffing (</strategy/plays/semi-bluff/>) with a straight or A/K high flush draw.

River: The final river shove does little to modify our villain's range, so we're left looking at either a busted draw or a strong made hand. So on a board of Q♥ 6♥ 7♣ 3♦ 3♠ after villain has bet on all three rounds, we can assume that villain's range consists of roughly:

Villain's hand range.

- 98s,85s,98o,85o – Busted straight draws.
 - Axh (except AQh, A7h, A6h), Kxh (except KQh, K7h, K6h) – Busted flush draws.
 - QQ+,77-66,76s,76o – Made hands.
-

Hand Range ?	Equity
AsQd	75.67%
QQ+, 77-66, AhKh, AhJh-Ah8h, A...	24.33%

After plugging this range in to PokerStove, we find that our equity against villain's range is 75.67%.

Therefore if we call the \$145 bet to win a total of \$401, on average we will walk away with **\$303.44 G bucks** (75.67% of \$401) for a profit of **+\$158.44 G bucks** (\$303.44 - \$145) each time. Although the call seems risky and we will lose 1 time out of 4, if we are confident about villain's range we stand to make more money over the long run because of G bucks.

The result of this hand does not matter, as making the call is the correct play. Nonetheless, if you like a happy ending then let's say that villain flipped over A♥ J♥ for a busted nut flush draw.

G bucks evaluation.

Even though this may be the first time you've read about the term "G bucks", the chances are that this particular concept has crossed your mind at some point whilst analyzing hands from previous sessions.

The concept of G bucks is more practical than Sklansky dollars because you never truly know the exact two cards that your opponent is holding before you make a call or a fold. Therefore G bucks are a more accurate way of calculating how good or bad a call was (or will be) over the long run.

If you have read the original article on G bucks by Phil Galfond you will notice that Galfond uses the opposite viewpoint by giving our hand a perceived range and our opponent a definite hand. As you can see I have reversed this approach, but either way both methods work out perfectly well.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

Villain's hand range.98s,85s,54s,98o,85o,54o – Busted straight draws
The 54o in your example is actually a straight draw made.

G **Greg**
0 points · 10 years ago

Thanks, schoolboy error. Updated the numbers and calculation.



Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

U put him on 30% PF raise. Cann t be holding 85o, 54o turn. Means wrong equity river...



Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

Hard hard hard ...! When I was studying psych and appl beh science degrees, i was forced to take stats, research techniques and related analyzes. I was and am a people helper; I was and am an artisto. Not a math or science lover!!!! And now i am studying poker w a winrate that simply sucks after 8 months of hard work. And once again i am forced to cram stat crap into my poor aging hate math head. Let me analyze character in attempt to free the wounded heart from its chains, and I am pretty good. But this math shit... gimme a break. Or rather, maybe it will be the deathnell for ever winning at poker, and if this is the case, forget it. I have better things to do with the rest of my life. Lady luck plagues the math deficient likely much more that those who find this boring stuff easy.....



Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

Putting your opponent in a certain range is not always very easy. Sometimes even you need to use weighted ranges. For example it is more probable that your opponents is holding KK or AKh rather than 85o. There are some software's which calculate equities based on weighted ranges, but in general in application it is not that easy.



kagey

0 points · 6 years ago

Galfond Bucks is YOUR HAND RANGE vs your opponent's hand.

In his ESPN article, Galfond states: "However, instead of taking your hand and seeing how it does against your opponent's hand, you take the entire range of your hand and see how it does against his hand."

Since only we can know our range and how we would play it, we can therefore know if V is making a profitable play against our range.

This whole article is has it BACKWARDS.

See: <http://www.espn.com/espn/po...> (http://www.espn.com/espn/poker/columns/story?columnist=bluff_magazine&id=2817110).

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Reverse Implied Odds

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#)

Reverse implied odds are the opposite of [implied odds \(/strategy/mathematics/implied-odds/\)](#). With implied odds you estimate how much you expect to win after making a draw, but with **reverse implied odds** you estimate how much you expect to lose if you complete your draw but your opponent still holds a better hand.



Reverse implied odds are how much you could expect to lose after hitting your draw.

If you find yourself on a draw, you can work out your [pot odds \(/strategy/mathematics/pot-odds/\)](#) to see whether or not a call would be a profitable play in the long run. If you do not have the pot odds to call, you can estimate your implied odds to gauge whether or not a call would still be profitable.

Now if you believe you have the implied odds to call a bet, you should also estimate your reverse implied odds to weigh out whether or not you should still call to make your draw. Although this may sound complicated, it really isn't too difficult to understand and there are many situations in which you should be aware of your reverse implied odds.

Reverse implied odds example.

Lets say you are facing a bet in a multi way pot holding 6♣ 7♦ and the flop comes 5♥ 8♠ T♥. You are now in a situation where **you should certainly be considering your reverse implied odds**.

If the first player to act bets and another player has called, you must think about whether you will have the best hand when you complete your draw.

- If a 4♥ or 9♥ comes, you will have made your straight, but then this also makes a possible flush for another player.
- In addition, any 9 makes a higher straight a possibility, which will again beat your straight.

In this situation we have **reverse implied odds** because if we make our draw, there is a possibility that one of our opponents will make a better hand than ours. Therefore if we make our straight and our opponent makes a hand like a flush, we will be losing money to them from calling down their bets with our second best hand.

If we do not have the pot odds to call the initial raiser's bet, we should be folding our hand because the reverse implied odds are outweighing any implied odds that we do have. This will be saving us from losing more money in the long run from chasing after draws that may well not end up being the best hand when they are completed.

Other reverse implied odds situations.

If we have weak flush draws then there is the potential that another player may be calling to hit a higher flush than ours. So we should be wary when calling bets holding 7♥ 8♥ on a 2♥ 5♣ K♥ board because our flush draw is not very strong.

The same applies to straight draws when we are drawing to the lower end of a straight. Furthermore, if we are on a flush or straight draw and the board has paired, there is the possibility that an opponent will make or already has made a full house.

In a nutshell, the following hands are going to have reverse implied odds that make calling to complete your draw quite dangerous:

- Weak flush draws.
- Low-end straight draws.

Mathematics of reverse implied odds.

Unfortunately for the players who like to be mathematically accurate in drawing situations, reverse implied odds are similar to implied odds in that we cannot put an exact figure on how much we can expect to win or lose.

Our reverse implied odds increase when there is a greater chance that our hand will not be the best after completing our draw, and they decrease when there is a greater chance that our hand will be the best after completing our draw.

As a basic rule, we can make calls with some reverse implied odds if our pot odds are very good, but if we have bad pot odds and reverse implied odds, we should be looking to fold.

Conclusion.

Reverse implied odds are not there to scare you out of calling bets to make draws, but more to make you aware that **you stand to lose money if you are calling to complete a weak draw**. If there are many players in a pot you should be especially sure that your draw is strong enough to hold up against other players in the pot that might also be calling to make their draws.

So if you are on a 9 high flush draw on the flop and there have already been a number of callers in front of you, you have to evaluate whether you think this draw is worth calling for, as there is a good chance that another player is on a higher flush draw than you.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy_\(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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Anonymous

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Example:

I have AA and our opponent has a pocket lets say 99 we both have 200 usd (1/2 usd)

here i will bet all the way my entire stack .

he raises preflop 5BB (10 usd) on the button and i am on the BB so :

the question here is how much i should reraise preflop to prevent our opponent from having high implied odds and stack us when hitting a set ?

Option 1:

I reraise preflop 30 usd and opponent calls the pot is now is : 60 usd

our remaining stack is 170 usd

Option 2:

I reraise preflop 40 usd and opponent calls the pot is now is : 80 usd

our remaining stack is 160 usd

Option 3:

I reraise preflop 50 usd and opponent calls the pot is now is : 100 usd

our remaing stack is 150 usd

the question here wich option is the best and why ?



Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

Assuming that you put them on a pocket pair, the best option to protect your aces would be option 2. Raising to \$40 makes it unprofitable in the long run for pocket 9s (And therefore profitable for you) to try and flop a set because the probability of flopping a set is approximately 9 to 1. After the button raise to \$10 and the re-raise to \$40, pocket 9s would have to call \$30 more to win only \$160 (implied odds) + \$50 (pot odds) = \$210. However, he would have to win at least \$300 total to make the call profitable long term. Making this call with pocket 9s (assuming pocket 9s knows that the BB has a higher pocket pair) would yield a -\$60 expected value over time. E.g., \$210 (what you'd win the 1 time you did flop a set) minus \$270 (\$30 times the 9 times you wouldn't flop a set).

Obviously, if you KNEW that the opponent with pocket 9s would call, then option 3 is the best option because you'd make more money over time and pocket 9s would lose more over time. However, I think option 2 is better because they are more likely to consistently call \$40 than \$50.



larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

This does not have so much to do with reverse implied odds, as other considerations are more important. With AA you always have the best hand preflop, and therefore from a pure value standpoint, you would like to get as much money in the pot as possible. So the answer is, that you should raise as much, as you think, he might call.

If you think he would call an all in shove with your entire 200 USD stack a large percentage of the time, you should shove all 200 USD. If you think he would fold to a 200 USD shove but call a 50 USD raise most of the time, you should raise 50 USD. And if you think he would only call 30 USD, or at least call 30 USD 3 times more often, than he would call 50 USD, you should raise 30 USD. Simple as that.

However there are also some more long-term considerations about balance. If your normal 3-bet size would be 30 USD with hands like QQ or AK (or bluffs), and you only raise 50 USD, when you have AA, your opponents might pick up on that and adjust to it by no longer calling your 50 USD 3-bets, because they will know, that you have exactly AA, when you 3-bet them that big.

On the other hand, how often do you have AA, and how many opponents will play against you long enough and pay enough attention to figure out, if you raise a bit bigger with AA than with other hands? So maybe you can afford to be a bit unbalanced in your bet sizing with exactly AA, even its not "good" poker from a very purist point of view.

But you need to consider also how elastic or inelastic your opponents calling range is. If he is folding to 3-bets 80% of the time, then maybe you should consider slowplaying and hope, that you can get money from him after the flop, when he hit something 2. best like a pair of K's with AK or holding pocket Q's on a J high board.

A hand like AA certainly don't offer ONLY reverse implied odds after the flop, so its not like you should be afraid to go postflop with it. Yes you will sometimes lose to a set or a straight or a flush or some random two pairs, and that always sucks. But you will also win many handsome pots with AA from someone over valuing a worse pair than yours. And you will improve to a set yourself about 20% of the time.

So not reraising at all preflop but just calling his raise is also an option, that should at least be considered against tighter and more competent players in particular.

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Poker Equity (Pot Equity)

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

Equity percentages in this article have been calculated using the handy (and free) [PokerStove \(/../tools/software/pokerstove/\)](#).

Pot equity (or just "Poker equity") is a mathematical application to poker that helps to explain why you should bet or check in certain situations.



What is equity in Poker?

Your equity is basically the amount of the pot that "belongs" to you based on the odds you have to win at a particular point in the hand.

So if there is 60% chance that you are going to win, you have 60% equity in the hand. It's as simple as that.

Poker equity example.

Say for example we hold A♦ K♦ preflop and we know for a fact that our opponent holds J♥ T♠, and there is **\$30 in the pot**. If we run these hands through an odds calculator it tells us that we have a **65%** chance of winning the hand, assuming that all the cards are dealt out and neither player folds. Therefore our current pot equity is **65% of \$30**, or put more simply, **\$19.5**.

This equity will not stay the same throughout the hand, because as more cards are dealt the strength and potential of each hand will change, and thus each player's equity will change with it.

If the flop comes J♦ T♣ 2♥, our equity will change dramatically as we no longer have the hand that is most likely to win the pot. If we run our hands through an odds calculator once more, it shows that we now have a **22%** chance of winning, which gives us a 22% equity of the amount that is currently in the pot.

Furthermore, if the turn comes the Q♠ giving us a straight, the odds of us winning the hand by the river will dramatically increase, and thus our equity will change once more. The odds calculator now tells us that we have a **91%** chance of winning, whereas our opponent only has 9% chance of winning as they have to catch a J or a T to make a full house and win the pot.

Where do these pot equity percentages come from?

These percentage figures come from repeated computer simulations of the particular situations to help find an accurate estimate of each hand's chances of winning.

So when you put the particular [hand combinations \(/strategy/mathematics/hand-combinations/\)](/strategy/mathematics/hand-combinations/) into an odds calculator, the calculator runs out the rest of the hand thousands of times and notes down how many times each hand wins to give an accurate figure on the likelihood of the hand holding up. The likelihood of a hand winning in a certain situation is the same as the equity the hand has.

A great example of a free (and very useful) equity calculator is [PokerStove \(/tools/software/pokerstove/\)](/tools/software/pokerstove/). Try it.

How to use equity in Poker.

It's good to know what our chances of winning are and how much equity we have, but how should we incorporate this sort of information into our game?

The answer is that you will rarely know what your opponent is exactly holding, and so it is not really possible to work out your equity whilst at the table and use it to your advantage. However, the principle of equity and the equity you have in each pot at each stage in the hand explains why you should bet your hands when you think that you have the best of it.

When you have the best hand at the table, you are betting for value when you have the majority of the equity in the hand.

Betting for value because of pot equity.

For example, on the turn (</strategy/hand-guide/turn/>), in the last example where we held A♦ K♦ against our opponents J♥ T♠ on a board of J♦ T♣ 2♥ Q♠, we had the nut straight and equity of 91%. This means that for every extra dollar that we can get into the pot, we will be winning 91 cents of it. Therefore it stands to reason that **we should try to get as much money into the pot as possible**, and thus we are betting for value and trying to maximize the amount of money we will be winning from the hand.

If you have more than 50% equity in the hand, you want to get as much money in the pot as possible.

It may be the case that the river brings another J or T giving our opponent the better hand with a full house, but this fact is irrelevant on the turn when we have 91% equity. So even though we are increasing the amount of money we can lose by putting more money into a pot where we could be outdrawn, we are also **increasing the amount of money we can win**.

By putting more money in the pot with the best hand at this point (even though there is the chance that we may still lose), we will be winning more money in the long run. Don't be afraid to put money into the pot when you feel that you have the best of it.

The principle of **equity in poker** also explains why you should raise with the best hand preflop ([../hand-guide/preflop/](/hand-guide/preflop/)). There are a number of reasons for raising preflop, such as; reducing the number of players in the pot, buying position ([../basic/position/](/basic/position/)), being the aggressor and so on.

Equity however is still an important principle that makes it profitable to raise preflop. Not only is it because you may well be getting money in with the best hand and therefore betting for value, but because you are raising the stakes with your raise, and creating opportunities to get more money into the pot when you have good equity in the pot later in the hand.

Poker equity evaluation.

Equity in poker is a basic principle involved with poker mathematics (</strategy/mathematics/>) that helps to explain the strategy of betting when you have the best of it. By betting for value you can increase the amount of money you will be winning from each particular hand. Similarly, by checking and folding with the worst of it in the right situations, you can help to reduce the amount of money that you will be losing.

Betting for value increases the amount of money you will be winning from each hand.

As already mentioned, it is often very difficult to exactly work out your equity in each situation, but it is good to take note of the fact that you want to try and get as much money into the pot when you are confident that you have the best hand.

For further reading on equity, take a look at the article on [poker equity and draws \(/strategy/mathematics/equity/drawing-hands/\)](#).

If you're getting confused between equity and EV, read the article on the [difference between equity and EV \(/articles/strategy/equity-ev-difference/\)](#).

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](#).

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H <http://onlineblackjack21.net/>
0 points · 11 years ago

It is worth noting and I really liked the presentation as well. I will surely come back for more of interesting posts.

D **Dan Deppen**
0 points · 12 years ago

You can also use www.holdemrangetool.com (<http://www.holdemrangetool.com>) to calculate equities. Its free like Pokerstove but you don't have to download any software.

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Fold Equity

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

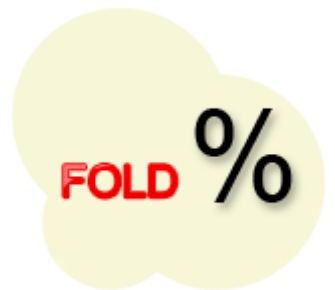
Note (October 2014): This article needs to be re-written. Some of the stuff is okay, but the math needs to be fixed.

Until then, here's a 5 minute video on [How To Use A Fold Equity Calculator](#) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QDTClodjal>).

— Greg

In this article I will cover the basics of **fold equity** and how it makes semi-bluffs profitable. It's a fairly simple concept though, so don't be too nervous about it.

If you don't know what equity is just yet, read up on the [poker equity](#) ([\(/strategy/mathematics/equity/\)](/strategy/mathematics/equity/)) article before reading this one.



What is fold equity?

Fold equity is the additional equity you gain in the hand when you believe that there is a chance that your opponent will fold to your bet.

Every time you bet, there is the chance that your opponent will fold their hand. If our opponent folds, we win the entire pot regardless of how strong our hand is.

This *chance* that our opponent will give up their hand to our bet will increase our overall equity in the hand because we are giving ourselves an **additional opportunity to win the pot** as opposed to just showing down the best hand.

So **every time we bet when there is a chance that our opponent will fold we are adding that little extra equity to our hand**. So when you bet, think of your overall equity like this:

$$\text{Total Equity} = \text{fold equity} + \text{hand equity}$$

If our opponent will always fold, we cannot lose and therefore have 100% equity. If we do get called, our hand has equity because it is going to win the pot a % of the time.

Therefore, our total equity is our fold equity + the equity our hand has when we get called.

On a basic level, fold equity can be summarized by the following simple statements:

How much fold equity do we have?

- If we think it is **likely** that our opponent will fold to our bet, we have **a lot of fold equity**.
 - If we think it is **unlikely** that our opponent will fold to our bet, we have **little fold equity**.
 - If we **do not think our opponent will fold** to our bet, we have **no fold equity**.
-

How do you get fold equity?

To get fold equity you have to bet or raise. If you are not betting or raising then you are not giving your opponent the opportunity to fold, so you will have no fold equity.

But you're not *trying* to obtain fold equity. You either have it or you don't, and you make the best decision based on what you've got. Nonetheless:

- The looser our image, the less fold equity we're likely to have.
- The tighter our image, the more fold equity we're likely to have.

You'll have the most fold equity when you've played the hand in a way that makes it believable that you've got your opponent beat. It's all about your betting pattern and history.

I probably should have clarified this point at the start, but I'm sure the majority of you will have assumed that this was the case anyway.

Mathematics of fold equity.

When you make a bet, you are basically **absorbing some of your opponent's equity** in the hand if there is a chance that they will fold. Fold equity can be expressed by a straightforward equation:

$$\text{Fold equity} = (\text{chance our opponent will fold}) * (\text{opponent's equity in the hand}).$$

The % chance that your opponent will fold is based on your knowledge of your opponent. So for example, using your experience you could say that there is a good chance that your opponent will fold 75% of the time when making a bet in a certain situation.

Your opponent's equity in the hand is pretty self explanatory. It's just the % of the pot they expect to win on average by the river. More specifically, it's the % equity their range ([\(/strategy/concepts/rem/range/\)](/strategy/concepts/rem/range/)) has, but don't worry about that for now.

Total equity in the hand.

| Total equity = fold equity + hand equity

As you will remember, your total equity in the hand is your current equity plus your fold equity. Fold equity on it's own isn't all that useful, so we add it to our standard equity to give us our overall equity in the hand.

Fold equity example.

Let's say we are on the flop and we know that our opponent is holding K♦ J♣ on the following flop:

Flop: Q♠ K♥ 2♠

Our hand: 9♠ T♠ - 42.4% equity.

Opponent's hand: K♦ J♣ - 57.6% equity.

I worked out the equity ([\(/strategy/mathematics/equity/\)](/strategy/mathematics/equity/)) of each of these hands using PokerStove ([\(/tools/software/pokerstove/\)](/tools/software/pokerstove/)). Get it already.

Our opponent is first to act and bets in to us. However, we are a little short stacked ([\(/strategy/general/short-stack/\)](/strategy/general/short-stack/)) and believe that if we push all-in there is a **50% chance that our opponent will fold**. Without even having to work this out we can already guess that this is going to be a profitable play over the long run, but lets do the math anyway.

- Fold equity = (chance our opponent will fold) * (opponent's equity in the hand).
- Fold equity = (0.5) * (57.4).
- **Fold equity = 28.8%.**

Now let's find our total equity in the hand.

- Total equity = our current equity + fold equity.
- Total equity = 42.4% + 28.8%.
- **Total equity = 71.2%.**

So every time we shove all-in with our drawing hand we will have 71.2% equity in the hand on average. Therefore, whereas calling to complete our draw would be unprofitable with our 42.4% equity, the addition of fold equity in the hand makes our shove a profitable play over the long run.

The benefits of fold equity.

| Fold equity is the reason why semi-bluffs can be profitable.

Fold equity is the driving force behind [semi-bluffs \(/strategy/plays/semi-bluff/\)](/strategy/plays/semi-bluff/). The vast majority of the time you will be using fold equity to your advantage when betting or raising with a flush or a straight draw.

On their own, these draws will generally not have enough equity to make it worth calling bets and raises. However, if you are the one betting and raising, **the addition of fold equity can turn the overall equity in your favour**. So over the long run, well-played semi-bluffs with drawing hands will be profitable.

Read the article on [playing drawing hands aggressively \(http://pokerstrategy.com/hands/drawing/aggression/\)](http://pokerstrategy.com/hands/drawing/aggression/) for further discussion on this topic.

Pure bluffs and fold equity.

Whether a *pure bluff* is profitable or not almost completely depends on fold equity. This is because if you have no equity in the hand based on the strength of your cards, you are relying on **fold equity alone** to make the bluff profitable. For example:

Board: Q♠ K♥ 2♠ 8♣ 2♦

Our hand: 9♠ T♠ - 0% equity.

Opponent's hand: K♦ J♣ - 100% equity.

Unless you believe that your opponent is **folding at least 50% of the time**, your bluff is not going to be profitable. Your fold equity = total equity here (current equity = 0%), so if it's less than 50% you will be losing more money than you win over the long run.

Fold equity evaluation.

You're not expected to get out your calculator and work out your fold equity every time you run a bluff or a semi-bluff. However, you can gauge a fairly accurate idea of your fold equity and use it to influence your decision when contemplating a semi-bluff.

| If you have little or no fold equity, strongly reconsider making that semi-bluff.

So don't worry about the numbers involved in fold equity during play, just familiarize yourself with it and go from there. Your semi-bluffing skills should improve nicely over time.

Related articles.

- [4Betting Mathematics \(/videos/wilcox/articles/4betting-mathematics/\)](/videos/wilcox/articles/4betting-mathematics/)

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

Hi
Interesting article. does pot size matter in these calculations? cuz some fold equity calculators take that in consideration. thanks

L 0 points · 11 years ago

The size of the raise relative to the pot size matters, and for that reason the math in the example in this article is incorrect. The downside of raising as a semibluff is, that the times, you do get called, you have created a larger pot and therefore stands to lose more, if you have less than 50% equity in that pot (with 1 opponent only). And therefore the total EV of the play is heavily influenced by the size of the raise relative to, what is already in the pot.

? Anonymous
0 points · 12 years ago

conger666 : my question is same.....

S Steven Northrup
0 points · 10 years ago

Soo wrong when you say your equity is fold % + your equity. It is fold % + ((100-Fold %)*Equity). It works in the example you gave because you chose 50% if you would have chosen 90% you would have had an equity of 134.2% which is wrong.

? Anonymous
0 points · 9 years ago

I agree that the article formula is wrong but your math is not correct either. that formula cannot output a value over 100%

? Anonymous
0 points · 10 years ago

You are wrong when you say "Unless you believe that your opponent is folding at least 50% of the time, your bluff is not going to be profitable". Here's proof:

Say the pot is \$100 in your 910s example. We expect our opponent will fold 40% of the time. Here is the Expected Value of a \$25 bluff.

$$EV = .6 * \$100 - .4 * \$25 = +\$50$$

K Kelsey
0 points · 9 years ago

$$EV = (\text{Prob. that opponent folds})(\text{Profit}) + (\text{Prob. that opponent calls/re-raises})(\text{Loss}) = (0.4)(+\$100) + (0.6)(-\$25) = +\$25 \text{ (not } +\$50)$$

There's a problem though: the probability that your opponent folds to a quarter-pot semi-bluff -- that is also giving them 5:1 pot odds -- is almost never going to be 40% -- probably ~15%.

$(0.15)(+\$100) + (0.85)(-\$25) = -\$6.25$, which means that a small pure bluff like this will be unprofitable in the long run.

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How To Calculate Expected Value - Boxes Method

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

How To Calculate Expected Value

The

Boxes

Method

Learning **how to calculate expected value in poker** can seem like a daunting task. It's one of those topics that you put off learning, simply because it always seems a little too tricky to try and get your head around. But to be honest, when you see equations like this...

$$EV = (\$1.60 \times 0.4) + \{ 0.6 \times [(\$2.80 \times 0.05) + (-\$1.20 \times 0.9)] \}$$



...I don't blame you for walking away. That kind of stuff makes Bill Chen's *The Mathematics of Poker* (<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1886070253?ie=UTF8&tag=thpoba-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1886070253>) look like *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Very_Hungry_Caterpillar). .

So, here's my attempt at helping you get your *expected value calculations* nailed down once and for all. I'm going to try and make it easier for you to visualize the process with my "boxes method". No more running away from [math strategy articles \(/strategy/mathematics/\)](#) and forum threads.

The three steps to calculating expected value.

In poker, you calculate expected value for a specific action. For example; what is the EV of *calling*? What is the EV of *folding*? What is the EV of *raising*? — Those are specific actions.

Once you've decided what action you want to calculate the EV of, you just need to follow these 3 simple steps:

The 3 steps to calculating EV (with the boxes method).

1. List all the possible outcomes of that action. (Make the boxes)
 2. Find the probability and the win/loss of each outcome. (Fill the boxes)
 3. Put it all together in an equation and work it out. (Solve the boxes)
-

Let's run through an actual example, and I'll explain each step as we go along.

The example hand situation.

We are playing \$100NL against a useless short stack player. We raise to \$4 with A♥ K♣ from MP. (.) and this short stack player in the SB..(.) is the only caller.

Flop: K♠ 7♦ 4♠

Pot: \$9

The short stack immediately moves all-in for \$6 (yep, \$6). After doing so, they also turn over their hand to show us 6♠ 5♠ — they have a flush draw and a straight draw. So the situation is as follows:

Hero: A♥ K♣

Villain: 6♠ 5♠

Flop: K♠ 7♦ 4♠

Pot: \$15

We have to call \$6 to continue. What is the EV of calling?

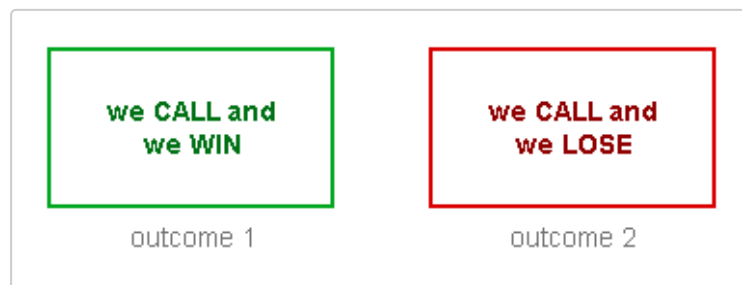
Step 1 - List all the possible outcomes. (Make the boxes)

If we call this \$6 bet, what can happen? Well, two things:

1. We call and end up **winning**.
2. We call and end up **losing**.

These are the only two possible things that can happen after we call. Easy stuff.

However, there are not always *just two* outcomes. There could be more or there could be less depending on the situation. Either way, it's a nice idea to think of each outcome as it's own separate "thing" -- or as I like to do, give it an imaginary box:



Step 2 - Find the probability and win/loss of each outcome. (Fill the boxes)

Okay, so we've got our two outcomes. Now we just need to find the probability of each outcome happening, and the amount of money we win or lose when it does happen. Let's work these out for each of the two outcomes one at a time.

1) We call and we end up winning.

The probability.

How do we work out the probability of winning in this situation? The easiest way is to just plug the cards in to [PokerStove \(/tools/software/pokerstove/\)](/tools/software/pokerstove/).

Hold'em			
Hand Distribution		Equity	Board:
Player 1	<input type="text" value="AhKc"/>	43.232%	<input type="text" value="Ks 7d 4s"/> select
Player 2	<input type="text" value="Gs5s"/>	56.768%	Dead Cards:
Player 3	<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/> select

This shows us that our probability of winning when we call is **43%**.

The win/loss.

If we call and win, we win the **\$15** in the pot.

The \$15 currently in the pot is our prize. We do not count our \$6 call in this amount because it belongs to us, and we cannot win what we already own.

Note: It's important to make the distinction between money that is yours to lose and money that is in the pot. They are two separate things. Don't get hung up on any amount of money you may have put in to the pot earlier on in the hand -- it doesn't matter.

2) We call and we end up losing.

The probability.

If we look at the same PokerStove results as before:

Hold'em			
Hand Distribution		Equity	Board:
Player 1	<input type="text" value="AhKc"/>	43.232%	<input type="text" value="Ks 7d 4s"/> select
Player 2	<input type="text" value="Gs5s"/>	56.768%	Dead Cards:
Player 3	<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/> select

We can see that the probability of losing when we call is **57%**.

The win/loss.

If we call and lose, we will lose our **\$6** call.

The only amount of money we are losing is our \$6 call. Sure, we've already put money in to the pot, but don't think of that as "belonging" to us anymore. It now belongs to the pot, so it's not something we can lose.

Tidying up step 2.

- **Outcome 1 - we call and we win.**
 - Probability = 43%
 - Win/loss = **+\$15**
- **Outcome 2 - we call and we lose.**
 - Probability = 57%
 - Win/loss = **-\$6**

Remember how we've already put these outcomes as separate boxes? Well, let's fill these boxes with this new information.



Step 3 - Put it all together in an equation and work it out. (Solve the boxes)

To form our EV equation, all we need to do is **multiply the probability by the win/loss in each of the boxes, then add all the boxes together.**

So, still using these boxes, our equation looks like this:

Diagram showing the EV equation:

$$EV = \boxed{0.43 \times +\$15} + \boxed{0.57 \times -\$6}$$

outcome 1 outcome 2

Now just work out the answers for each box:

$$EV = \boxed{+\$6.45} + \boxed{-\$3.42}$$

outcome 1 outcome 2

Finally, add them all together and we get the answer to our EV calculation:

$$EV = \boxed{+\$3.03}$$

answer

So the EV of calling with AK is **+\$3.03**. Every time we make this call, we win **\$3.03** on average. Therefore, *calling* -- as opposed to *folding* (we make \$0 by folding)-- is the correct play.

This amount of money could also be referred to as \$3.03 Sklansky Bucks (</strategy/mathematics/sklansky-dollars/>).

It doesn't feel very mathematical using all those boxes though. How can we show it in a more "mathematical-looking" way?

Answer: Just replace the boxes with brackets, like this:

$$EV = (0.43 \times +\$15) + (0.57 \times -\$6)$$

outcome 1 outcome 2

$$EV = (0.43 \times \$15) + (0.57 \times -\$6)$$

$$EV = (\$6.45) + (-\$3.42)$$

$$EV = +\$3.03$$

Note: Notice how we only had 43% chance to win the hand (or 43% "equity" (</strategy/mathematics/equity/>)), yet calling is still +EV? That's all thanks to the good pot odds (</strategy/mathematics/pot-odds/>) we are getting when our opponent bets all-in for \$6 in to a \$9 pot on the flop.

Final thoughts.

I hope that nobody feels patronized by my “box method” for working out EV in poker. **It’s just that ever since I started thinking about expected value calculations in terms of “chunks” or “boxes”, it all became much easier.** It may not be for everyone, but if this box method for calculating expected value works for you, then I’m glad to have shared it.

This method is also easily extensible. If there is a situation where there are more than 2 outcomes, just add more boxes. The boxes are just there to split everything up and make EV calculations easier to digest.

In all honesty, the only difficult thing about calculating expected value is the notation. The actual method is surprisingly straightforward, and my primary hope is that this article has helped to highlight that fact.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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M **Marko Adamović**
0 points · 11 years ago

hi, i have a question. i play poker about 2 years now, recreationally though, and i'm a bit of a donk. my question is: how do you calculate EV before deciding to call when you don't know what are his hands? using hand range, or what? would appreciate if you could answers this silly question..

G **Greg**
0 points · 9 years ago

Yep, figure out a range.

Working with ranges is what makes you a poker player.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

How do you calculate EV for situations where someone doesn't go all in? Say you call w 66 in the Big Blind vs a button raise. Flop is J52r and you check. Villain bets half pot. What do you do?

G

Greg

0 points · 9 years ago

This is a lot trickier, because with an EV equation you need to account for each scenario. Your example is very open ended, because so many different things could take place on the turn and river that there is no simple mathematical equation for this decision so early on in the hand.

In this situation it would be impractical to try and figure out EV. There are too many things to try and account for.

Instead, I would think on a more basic level about what kind of range my opponent is c-betting with, and whether they're likely to bet on the turn. Does your 66 have good equity against their range to make it worth calling? How do you deal with different turn cards?

EV requires a lot of specifics, and if you haven't got easy access to all the specifics, try a simpler approach.

A

aron

0 points · 7 years ago

How do you even know your opponent's hands before? I mean let's say I think he has KK or QQ or AJ and I'm not sure. So do I plug in all 3 or what?

?

Anonymous

0 points · 7 years ago

The only problem I have is doing this in my head fast and rounding it with big numbers.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 7 years ago

Give me an example that the first box on top of the article can be used on it. (no matter if numbers change)

J

Joel Wanje

0 points · 6 years ago

i need every updates if possible thro. my [email:wanjejoel@gmail.com](mailto:wanjejoel@gmail.com) ([email:wanjejoel@gmail.com](mailto:wanjejoel@gmail.com)).

?

Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

Hi again Greg...

Thanks for this ... the weakness in my game is the math... since busting out in PP and PS in August while in Cda, I've dropped back into play money to practice my feel for the online game. But i won't deposit again til i am confident on my math, which comes super hard. So thanks for this clustering method of displaying and applying the EV side of the game. Will study and practice more w Pokerstove, and then see in play money shows results before back into cash. Take care

Bruce

M

MikeM

0 points · 11 years ago

Hi Greg,

I know the above article is only to show EV calculation methods, but villain is correct in shoving isn't he, as he has so much equity in the pot ?

M

MikeM

0 points · 11 years ago

Hi again Greg,

Just read the article on equity and drawing hands, so all makes sense now.

Thanks.

B

Bazil

0 points · 11 years ago

In practice, yes; villain is right to shove: for a \$6 investment, he had increased the size of the pot - in which he has >50% equity - by \$12. If hero calls, the play had an EV of +\$0.84 and if hero incorrectly folds... then the play has an EV of +\$6.45.

Theoretically though, it's not as cut-and-dried as that. If villain knew that the hero was a complete calling-station who would never raise and never fold, then the optimum play would be to check the flop and the turn, and see the cards for free. Only if he hit a straight or flush would he then shove all-in.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 11 years ago

Im just curious.. The situation is set up so that the villain goes all in, THEN shows his hand before you even call? Who does that? Seems like an impractical situation. They're only going to show their hand after youve made the call, which seems to make the method useless, at least in that situation.

G **Greg**
0 points · 9 years ago

Yeah you're right. I just wanted to try and make the steps as simple as possible, and using an exact hand for the opponent made the equity part as simple as I could make it.

To make it realistic, instead of giving your opponent an exact hand, give them a *range* of hands instead.

Working with ranges is the next step, and you can just as easily do this using a poker equity calculator (e.g. Pokerstove) as it is to enter an exact hand. The hard part is figuring out the range of hands your opponent is likely to have given the way they played the hand up to that point - but that's what poker is all about.

T **Teras Petrayuk**
0 points · 9 years ago

**Hello,
It's time to pray n hope is our world not discrimination...
stop discrimination,**

Agen Bola, Agen Judi Bola, Situs Bola Online, Bandar Judi Bola, Bandar Taruhan Bola, Situs Taruhan Bola, Prediksi Bola Akurat
<http://www.7meter.biz> (<http://www.7meter.biz>).

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

The boxes immediately above Step 3 are incorrect. You explain something different for the 2nd outcome. FYI.

G **Greg**
0 points · 12 years ago

Ah yes, good eyes. Forgot to change the 15 to a 6 in the box on the right. Thanks for pointing that out – I updated it.

A **Arv**
0 points · 10 years ago

I want to thank you for taking the time to make such an excellent example, describing every step in detail. You are a genius, and this is very much appreciated.

G **Greg**
0 points · 9 years ago

Thank you Arv, this means a lot.

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Expected Value

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#)

“ *Expected Value is the amount of money an action expects to win or lose on average.* ”

Expected Value (EV) is a term you will come across again and again in forums and in poker strategy articles. In this guide I will explain exactly what expected value is and why it is important when it comes to making decisions at the table.

Although somewhat similar, try not to get *expected value* confused with equity ([\(/strategy/mathematics/equity/\)](/strategy/mathematics/equity/)). If you are getting confused between the two, read the article on the difference between equity and EV ([\(/articles/strategy/equity-ev-difference/\)](/articles/strategy/equity-ev-difference/)).



What is expected value?

Expected value is the amount of money a certain play expects to win or lose on average.

In any given situation in poker, a check, call, bet, raise and fold will have certain expected values. Some of these plays will win money, whereas others will lose you money. Out of the actions that will win you money, some will win more money than others on average.

As you can guess, **the aim is to make the play with the greatest expected value.**

Here are two abbreviations that you will want to familiarize yourself with:

- **+EV** - This is a positive expectation play that will win money over the long run.
- **-EV** - This is a negative expectation play that will lose money over the long run.

How to work out expected value.

You multiply the results of the possible outcomes by their probability of happening, and then you add all of them together.

Trust me; it's really not as difficult as I make it sound. Mathematics always looks a lot harder before it's explained to you, so let me give you some examples.

1. Simple coin flip example ↓ ↗
2. Simple poker example (using a flush draw) ↓ ↗

1) Simple coin flip example.

Almost every good article or guide that attempts to explain expected value uses a straightforward coin-flipping example to start off with, so I'm not going to be breaking any trends here. Let's get started...

- A friend offers to **pay you \$1.50** every time she flips a coin and it lands on **tails**.
- However, every time it lands on **heads** you have to **pay her \$1**.

What is the expected value of each and every coin flip? How much do we expect to win or lose on each individual flip? Is it a profitable game for us?

To work out our **expected value** for this game, we need to look at the results of each possible outcome and their probability of happening.

Possible results and their probabilities:

Heads = -\$1.00

$p(\text{Heads}) = 0.5$

Tails = +\$1.50

$p(\text{Tails}) = 0.5$

$p(\text{Heads})$ is a faster way of writing "the probability of heads". Guess what $p(\text{Tails})$ means.

If it's a fair coin (as opposed to all those unfair coins you run in to), the probability of it landing either heads or tails is $1/2$, or 0.5 .

All we have to do now is multiply these outcomes (the amount we win in each possible outcome) by their probability and add them together to find the EV for each coin flip.

Working out EV for each coin flip.

$$\begin{aligned}\text{EV} &= \text{Heads} + \text{Tails} \\ &= (-\$1 \times 0.5) + (\$1.50 \times 0.5) \\ &= (-0.5) + (0.75) \\ &= \mathbf{\$0.25}\end{aligned}$$

This means that **every time we flip a coin in this game we are winning \$0.25 on average**. Over 2 flips we should win \$1.50 once and lose \$1 once, given us a net profit of \$0.5 over 2 flips. Therefore, over 1 flip this works out to earn us \$0.25 on average.

It doesn't make a difference if we lose 10 flips in a row, because over the long run this will remain as a profitable game (unless our good lady friend has decided to cheat us in some way of course).

There will be variance (/strategy/other/variance/), but over a big enough number of trials the amount we have won should be very close to our expected value for those trials.

2) A basic example with a flush draw.

It's all well and good learning about the basics of expected value with coin flips, but how does expected value apply to poker? It's pretty much the same thing, so let's look at a straightforward expected value example with a flush draw.

Our hand: A♠ 2♠

Board: Q♠ K♥ 3♠ 7♦

The pot is \$100 and our opponent moves all-in for \$50. So we have to call \$50 for a chance of winning a total of \$150. Assuming that the only way for us to win the hand is by hitting our flush on the last card, what is the expected value of calling? In other words, is it profitable for us to call?

We can work out if calling is profitable using pot odds (/strategy/mathematics/pot-odds/), but with **expected value** we're going to work out exactly how much we expect to win or lose on average by making the call.

Possible results and their probabilities:

Call, hit flush = +\$150

p(hit flush) = 0.2

Call, miss flush = -\$50

p(miss flush) = 0.8

The probability of hitting a flush on the river is 4.1 to 1, which is roughly 20% chance or **0.2**. Therefore, the odds of not hitting a flush will be $1 - 0.2 = \mathbf{0.8}$. I used the outs [odds charts \(/tools/odds-charts/\)](/tools/odds-charts/) for these particular odds.

Also, notice how we are looking to win \$150 and only lose \$50 in each outcome. We are only going to lose \$50 because that is how much we are paying to try and hit our flush in this single decision. We are not factoring in money that we have put in to the pot in previous betting rounds. We just take the facts from this decision alone.

Working out EV for calling:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{EV} &= \text{hit flush} + \text{miss flush} \\ &= (\$150 \times 0.2) + (-\$50 \times 0.8) \\ &= (\$30) + (-\$40) \\ &= \mathbf{-\$10}\end{aligned}$$

This means that **every time we call this bet to try and hit our flush, we are losing \$10 on average**. Therefore this is a **-EV** play and we should fold instead of call.

What is the use of expected value in poker?

Every single play you make in poker revolves around the concept of maximizing your expected value.

If you can always manage to make the play with the greatest expected value, then you will be able to win the most money possible from each and every session you play.

Obviously making the most +EV plays in every single situation is not going to be possible for most, but it is something that you should strive to achieve even if you never expect to reach this goal (as bleak as that sounds).

Good poker strategy revolves around making +EV decisions.

There is a wealth of topics and guides when it comes to poker strategy (see the [Texas Hold'em strategy_\(/\)](#) section on this site for example). At the core of each of these tips and strategies is the aim to help you make the most +EV plays possible and help you to avoid making -EV plays. That's basically what all poker strategy is about.

How do I use expected value during play?

You don't to be honest. Expected value is not like pot odds in that you can use it on the fly to work out whether decisions are profitable or not. You simply do not have enough time to work out the EV of every possible play to help you find the most profitable action.

Expected value is best used for post-game analysis where you try and work out whether or not you had made optimal plays in certain hands. EV is also a very important concept that helps to explain why some plays are good and why some plays are bad.

Evaluation.

Expected value in poker is the amount of money you expect to win or lose from each play you make. The more +EV plays you make, the more money you will win. It's as simple as that.

Expected value (or EV as you will come to familiarize yourself with) isn't really a topic that is going to revolutionize your game right now, but nonetheless it's definitely one of the most important mathematical concepts to learn about. Working out EV in hands can get a lot more complicated than the ones above, but the process for working out expected value is exactly the same.

If you're familiar with the [REM process \(/strategy/concepts/rem/\)](#), the [maximize \(/strategy/concepts/rem/maximize/\)](#) section is all about maximizing value from your hands, which is a key component to making money from poker.

If this article didn't quite do it for you when it comes to working out EV, try my ["boxes method" for calculating expected value in poker \(/strategy/mathematics/expected-value/calculate/\)](#). You may find that more helpful.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](#).

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?

Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

Hello I think you are wrong in example: Call and hit our flush = win \$150 , but there must be \$200 --> pot \$100, opponent \$50 all-in and our \$50 call -> as you count there <http://www.thepokerbank.com...>
(<http://www.thepokerbank.com/articles/strategy/equity-ev-difference/>)

What is right? Counting all (pot + opponent \$ + my call) or only count (pot+ opponent \$) ?

G

Greg

0 points · 12 years ago

Hi Scar,

The amount we win is \$150 and not \$200.

It looks as though I wasn't very clear with my wording on that other page. You do not add your own potential call to the pot size to find the total "win" amount.

Thanks for asking this question, I re-worded the example on the other page to make it easier to follow.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

Isn't this just similar to sklan's dollar? :)

?

Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

Not really no

Sklansky Dollars are to analyse post game statistics, and also to look at how you played on a table. This system is to use during a game, when you need to make calculated risks and calls.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

what about raise ev?

$EV = f * (p + r) + (1 - f) * s * (p + r + r) - r$ where f = probability that opponent will fold; p = pot size before my bet; r = my raise; s = probability of my hand winning in a showdown is it right? i think $EV = f * (p + r) + (1 - f) * s * (p + r) - r$
is right..

what s ur opinion?

G **Greg**
0 points · 12 years ago

I tried writing this down but the notation was too awkward to follow on its own. But if you put it in to a word equation and go from there it's easier.

Basically your EV when raising can be worked out by finding the following individual EVs:

$EV = [\text{Villain Folds}] + [(\text{Villain Calls and We Win}) - (\text{Villain Calls and We Lose})]$

Hope that helps with your equation. A few tips though:

- You don't win your own bet when your opponent folds, so it's just $(f * p)$
- The second half of the equation is an EV equation in itself with 2 sides (we lose) + (we win)

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 13 years ago

there is one thing i dont yet understand. How will EV help you making decisions whether to call or not?

G **Greg**
0 points · 13 years ago

On a basic level, the more +EV a decision, the better it is over the long run.

For example, if you worked out the EV of calling and the EV of raising in a certain situation, you may find that whilst calling and raising are both +EV, raising might have the slightly greater EV. This means that by raising you would be making more money on average over the long run, which makes it the more profitable/better play.

You can't expect yourself to do these calculations on the fly in the middle of the hand though. A lot of the value of working out EV calculations comes from the insights you gain in post-session analysis. You can then use these insights to help you make better decisions in future.

Does that answer your question?

?

Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

You're a good man Greg. I have a question. My kings heads up preflop are 80+ dog against his 2 unseen cards meaning an all in push is a posi ev move but if he flips over aces then my kings magically become a very negative ev move so my question is do you/can you make ev decisions based on his mystery cards against your whole cards or is that just nonsensical.

G

Greg

0 points · 10 years ago

You just have to give him a range and work out the EV based on that.

If you think he could have any two cards, then work out the EV for any two cards. It doesn't matter what he turns over - the results don't affect the quality of your initial decision.

All you can do is make the best decisions with the information you've got. The results will take care of themselves, so don't concern yourself with them.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

From that example, the -EV would tell us not to call. However if we worked out the card odds and pot odds (36% and 25%) they are favourable towards calling.....

G

Greg

0 points · 13 years ago

I think you may be finding the wrong card odds. It looks as though you're finding the odds for completing a flush when on the flop (and waiting for the river). In this case, the odds are around 36%.

However, in the above example we're on the turn, which means that the card odds are closer to 20% (19.6% to be precise). Therefore, because the card odds % is lower than the pot odds %, it means that it is unprofitable to call -- which is correct in this example.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

Right you are, my mistake. Also one more question, is it possible to count the out for more than one possible winning hand? Say i had an ace and a five, suited, and the flop deals two more of the same suit is it possible to count the outs for the flush(9) and for another ace to be dealt(3) making a total of 12? Assuming that a pair of aces would hold over anything else my opponent has.

G

Greg

0 points · 13 years ago

Good question. And yep, that's perfectly fine. If the card will help you to make the best hand, you can count it as an out.

The only thing you have to be careful of is to not count the same card/out more than once. For example, lets say you have AsKs, your opponent has JJ and the flop is JsTs2h. You have 9 spade outs for the flush, and 4 queen outs for the straight. However, you actually have 12 outs instead of 13, because you can only count the Qs once.

Aside from remembering that, your thoughts are 100% correct.

S

Studentofpoker

0 points · 9 years ago

I have a question how would i calculate how much i am my real result is off my ev?

for example if i have AA vs KK en preflop i bet a 100 and get called. 80% of 200 is 160-100 invest is 60 ev.

Now lets say flop is K75 rainbow both have a 100 left i bet 100 KK calls i lets say i have 4% to win. making it -92. Can i say that my ev over the whole hand is $60 - 92 = -32$. (this is what i assume).

Now same situation preflop. flop is the same. i bet 50 KK raises, and for some reason i fold my flop ev= -50 right. so the hand whole hand ev is $60 - 50 = +10$ ev. In this specific case, right.

what if the KK in the last example folded top set (missclick or whatever). my ev of that bet, would be 0. right totaling +60 ev.

Am I correct so far?

V

vlzvl

0 points · 10 years ago

I might be wrong but isn't the following a bit easier?

I mean, who cares of the amount of EV? just + or -, or is there a meaning of how much you're losing in the long term if you just losing at all?

A = (percentage to hit * Pot size)

B = (percentage to lose * Call size)

If A bigger, call

PS. In that case i mostly count pot odds.

In your flush draw example, pot odds are 25% (200 to win and 50 to call) and my hand odds are 20% (flush draw). It tells me also to not call (pot odds are bigger) so this is also true but somewhat easier than EV.

Are there any cases where EV will get us something different / hidden than pot odds calculation? I'm speaking of cases where the math can be completed in less than 15 seconds of online cash game :)

tx

J

Joel Ericson

0 points · 9 years ago

Thats exactly the mathematical formula he shows...

G

Greg

0 points · 10 years ago

You can find a simple +/- if you like. But knowing the \$ EV amount allows you to compare decisions.

For example, let's say our opponent shoves all in preflop for \$100 and we know he has a range of QQ+/AK. Here's our EV if we call with the following hands:

$$AK = (0.4 \times \$100) - (0.6 \times \$100) = -\$20$$

$$T9s = (0.3 \times \$100) - (0.7 \times \$100) = -\$40$$

(NOTE: AK equity = 40%, T9s equity = 30%)

Now we know that calling with T9s is twice as damaging to our winrate compared to calling with AK. So not only do we know whether or not calling is going to win or lose us money over the long run, we know to what degree.

Pot Odds help to give you a rough idea of your equity in the hand.

Equity is used in EV equations to analyze whether an action is profitable or not.

Ideally, using Pot Odds will be roughly inline with the results you get from EV equations. However, because Pot Odds are rough indicators of equity and don't factor in all possibilities outside of hitting a drawing hand, they may return different results.

EV equations are most accurate. Pot Odds are a rough guide.

You will find this article useful to help give you a better handle on pot odds, equity, and EV:

[http://www.thepokerbank.com...](http://www.thepokerbank.com... (http://www.thepokerbank.com/articles/strategy/equity-ev-difference/)) (http://www.thepokerbank.com/articles/strategy/equity-ev-difference/).

V

vlzvl

0 points · 10 years ago

Thank u for the reply Greg :)

As i understand EV is more "long-term", for analyzing and fixing tendencies of your game like stopping the bad T9s in a particular hand situation and specific situations in general that needs time, and not recommended for live sessions where "short-term" pot-odds are more identical for yes/no answers.

I'll read more of them, thanx for the articles, great work you have there :)

tx

G **Greg**
0 points · 10 years ago

Yep you got it.

Pot odds give you the quick and easy answer. EV gives you the exact answer, and you can figure out the *why*.

Working with EV and analyzing the results adds deeper levels of understanding to your game. When you play, you'll be able to draw upon a repository of EV calculations to help improve your response to familiar situations. This is because you'll be able to think better in terms of numbers and not general ideas, and numbers are more precise.

No problem, and thank you :D

S **SmokewoodBlues**
0 points · 6 years ago

You pure math guys are the easiest to beat. Every time I know you are on a draw I just bet the pot. You do the math and see it is -EV and fold. You're like robots....I'll bluff you 95% of the time and win.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

I don't understand the difference between calculating pot odds in order to make a decision to call a raise on a drawing hand vs. calculating ev? In the example you used with the flush draw, doesn't calculating the pot odds for the same decision yield the same outcome: fold? I also worked it out for both a larger raise by our opponent as well as a scenario with a smaller raise. In both situation the pot odds came up with the same decision as calculating EV, but faster, no?

G **Greg**
0 points · 12 years ago

Good question bdp. Yes, using pot odds would be faster for that example. Both methods would return the same result. In general you could think of EV equations as a more advanced version of pot odds.

- Working out pot odds is quick and easy, and can be done on the fly at the table. It gives you a basic but useful idea of whether you're paying too much for your draws to be profitable.
- EV equations allow you to work out whether or not to call or fold in a range of different situations, and not just when playing draws. They're more accurate but best used off the table (in post-session analysis for example).

In this article I could definitely have used pot odds to work out whether or not to call or fold, but I just wanted a simple example to introduce EV. So yes, using EV for the flush draw here was overkill and slower.

You can see how EV equations can be more complex here: <http://www.thepokerbank.com...>
(<http://www.thepokerbank.com/strategy/plays/semi-bluff/examples/>).

J **Jin Y.**
0 points · 5 years ago

Hey Greg, isnt the probability of flush draw hitting a flush by the river 2 :1? 33%?

J **Jin Y.**
0 points · 5 years ago

I'm referring to your example in #2 EV calculation on Flush draw.

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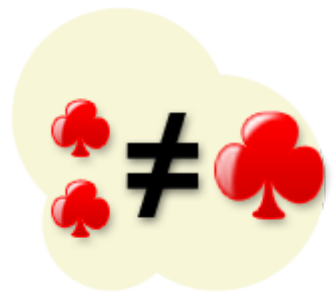
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Common Mistakes Using Odds

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

As a regular cash game or tournament player, it is important that you are familiar with the [mathematics of poker \(/strategy/mathematics/\)](#).



This involves working out the odds of each situation so that you can determine what the most profitable action will be. A good player will be able to take into account their [pot odds \(/strategy/mathematics/pot-odds/\)](#), [implied odds \(/strategy/mathematics/implied-odds/\)](#), and even their [reverse-implied odds \(/strategy/mathematics/reverse-implied-odds/\)](#), when calculating their next action.

However, with all these calculations taking place, **there are a few simple errors that can be made** when trying to work out the *correct odds* in each situation. The top 3 common mistakes I see are:

1. Miscalculating the odds of draws.
2. Miscalculating percentage odds.
3. Misunderstanding the difference between ratios and probability.

1) Miscalculating the ratio odds of draws.

The most common mistake that even the best players make is **working out the incorrect odds they have for a draw**. Many players will look up and remember the odds of completing such draws like flushes and straights by the **final river card**. Whilst these figures may be correct, it will not be profitable to use these odds when you are calling a bet on the flop to try and complete your draw by the turn.

As already mentioned, many odds charts will give you the likelihood of completing a draw by the river, for example the chance of completing a flush draw after the turn and river have been dealt is roughly 2:1. However, if we are only using these odds to compare whether we should call a bet on the flop to try and make our hand by the turn, we are neglecting the fact that we may well face another bet on the turn to see the river.

When looking up the odds on draws, use the odds for the next card only when on the flop. Do not use the odds for completing your draw by the final card.

A bet on turn is not unlikely, and so our pot odds will be worsened by the fact that we will have to have called two sizeable bets instead of one on the flop. Therefore instead of using the odds to complete draws by the river, **we should be using the odds to complete draws by the next card instead**. Typically for flush draws, the odds of completion by the next card will be 4:1. So when on the flop:

- Odds of completing a flush by the turn: 4:1
- Odds of completing a flush by the river: 2:1

Ratio odds miscalculation example.

For example, if we are on the flop (</strategy/hand-guide/flop/>), with a flush draw and our opponents bet \$40 making the pot \$120, we are getting 3:1 odds from the pot. Therefore this appears to make a call with 2:1 odds of completing our hand profitable. However, we don't complete our hand on the turn and our opponent now bets \$80 into the \$160 pot, again giving us 3:1 odds.

The fact that our opponent has bet again has reduced our pot odds so much that it has made our call on the flop unprofitable. This is because if we now call the bet on the turn, we would have effectively paid \$120 into what became a \$200 pot, which changes our pot odds to 1.7:1.

Therefore by using the incorrect 2:1 odds on the flop we have made an incorrect call, and we would be losing money in the long run by making this play. However, if we had used the correct odds of making our hand by the next card instead of the final card, which are 4:1, we could have folded knowing that we had the wrong odds to play on and saved ourselves some money.

2) Miscalculating percentage odds.

Some players prefer to work out the percentage odds to determine whether or not to make a call instead of using the ratio method as above. However, there is a very basic mistake that is frequently made using this method, especially if you are already used to working with the ratio method.

The common mistake is not adding your own call into the total size of the pot when working out your percentage pot odds. With ratio odds it is something that you are not required to do, but with the percentage odds it is important that you do not forget to do so.

Always add your own call amount to the total size of the pot when working out percentage odds.

Percentage odds miscalculation example.

If your opponent bets \$40 into an \$80 pot, the total size of the pot after you have added together your opponent's bet and your call will be **\$160**.

Therefore your \$40 call into the total pot of \$160 would be worth 25% of that pot, therefore you can then use this 25% figure along with the chance of completing your hand to determine whether or not to call. This is the correct way to work out the odds.

The error is made when players do not add their own bet into the total pot size, so instead of coming out with a total \$160 pot, they will be working with a \$120 pot, as they have forgotten to add their own \$40 into it. Therefore they will then work out the percentage of \$40 out of \$120, which works out to be 33%. This is quite far off the \$40 out of \$160 being 25%, and it could mean the difference between making a profitable or losing call to try and complete your draw.

3) Misunderstanding the difference between ratios and probability.

This mistake is far less of a problem, as you will rarely ever be required to mix odds and probabilities at the table when working out draws. However, it is useful to be aware of the differences in them. For example, having 1 in 4 odds of completing a draw is slightly different to having 4:1 ratio odds of completing a draw.

Ratio and probability figures in poker are different. A 4:1 ratio is not the same as a 1 in 4 fraction.

X in Y odds and X:Y (X to Y) ratios.

- **1 in 4.** For every 4 times an event takes place, you will have the result you are after 1 time (out of those 4 trials).
- **4 to 1.** For every 5 times an event takes place, you will have the result you are after 1 time and the unwanted result 4 times (so 5 trials in total).

The 1 in 4 odds takes place over 4 trials, where you will obtain the wanted outcome once and an unwanted outcome 3 times. Whereas in the 4:1 ratio odds, there are 5 trials, where you will obtain the expected outcome once, and an unwanted outcome 4 times.

As you can see, you have to add the ratio together to find the total number of trials, whereas the total number of trials is already given to you in the fraction format. Below is a simple table to help illustrate the differences between this particular set of odds.

	Wanted	Unwanted	# Trials
4 to 1	1	4	5
1 in 4	1	3	4

Conclusion.

There are numerous ways in which a player can slip up when using mathematics in poker. It is not uncommon to even have regular veteran players make these simple mistakes, so don't be too concerned if you make a small mistake every now and then.

This article was written to try and help make you aware of the most common mistakes so that you can avoid them in the future. The more you play and work with odds, the better you will become at making precise and profitable decisions at the poker table, so get out there and play!

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy_\(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

This is a great article, your site is easily the greatest site for poker articles and strategy. It is so well organized that it makes it so easy to navigate. I started playing poker a year ago and have been reading tons of your articles and they are all entertaining and simple enough to follow.

Thank you for all the work you put into it.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 7 years ago

So in one example, you say if opponent bets 20 to make the pot 100, our pot odds are 100:20 or 5:1. In the other example, you say the opponent adds 30 to make the pot 90. Based on example 1, our pot odds should be 90:30 or 3:1. But you say we must add our bet to it making it 120:30 or 4:1. Which is it?

A

antifuffa83

0 points · 6 years ago

"Always add your own call amount to the total size of the pot when working out percentage odds."

But why??? I mean, isn't the same risk/reward with ratio and percentage?? If my opponent bet 40 in a pot of 80 the pot now is 120, the pot odds are 3:1 in percentage 33% If I had to add my call 40 to the pot of 120 the pot will be 160 this means 4:1 or 25%. Why with percentage we must add the call to the pot and with ratio don't??

J

Justin Mike

0 points · 6 years ago

Are pot odds used only for drawing hands? What about in the below situation? What would u guys do?

No limit texas holdem \$0.50 / \$1 cash game example:

My hand: 8d 8c - mid position. Opponent - late position

Blinds and every one else fold. I raise to \$3. He calls. Flop is Kc 8h Js and there is \$7.5 in pot. I bet \$4. He raises to let's say \$10. What should I do and y? Should I be concerned that he might have started with pocket

jacks and got a three of a kind jacks?

In this case do we call based on odds or instincts? By odds I mean odds for another 8 to get four of a kind or a king or jack to get full house? I get confused in such situations sometimes.

P

Punky

0 points · 6 years ago

I wouldn't really put him on pocket Jacks right away. He could easily have KQ or even KJ from late position. I would say your 8 are very good at this point. I would assume he has KQ, betting thinking he has the best hand. Right now he cannot put you on pocket 8's neither. I would be betting for value to close the gap on what his range could be.

C

Chacha Davidoff

0 points · 11 years ago

40 in a 120 pot : 3 to1

80 in a 160 pot also 3 to 1? must be 2 to 1 right?

?

Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

No.. He sais the opponent puts 80 in a 160 pot.. So a call would be 80 in 240 => 3:1

?

Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

In the first paragraph of "X in Y odds and X:Y ratios." You have actually said the same thing twice.

"for every 4 times an event takes place, you will have the result you are after once"

"for every 4 times an event takes place, you will have the result you are after 1 time"

I understand what you are trying to say but you havent said it here.

I think you need to change the wording to clarify for people.

.....otherwise thanks for an very clear and simple informative site.

Its awesome!!

G

Greg

0 points · 13 years ago

Yeah, I could have definitely been a bit clearer there. I updated the article and added some bullet points, which I think help to make that section easier to follow.

Thanks for pointing that out, I'm sure others will appreciate the new format.

Thanks for the awesome words about the site as well!



Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

It's not that the misunderstanding is between percents and ratios, the misunderstanding is between probability and odds. This gets confused because odds are usually expressed as ratios and probability as a percentage. But either could be used for either - they are both just ways of expressing a number.

Odds - The number of favorable outcomes vs. (divided by) the number of non-favorable outcomes. Example, rolling a 6 on a standard die. 1:5 (1 6 vs 5 others). Usually expressed as 1:5, but could be expressed as 20% (as long as you make it clear it was % odds, not % probability, it is technically correct to do so). It's usually expressed as a ratio because it's used for moneyline bets (Step up Step up, I'll get ya' 5).

Probability - The number of favorable outcomes vs. the number of *total* outcomes. Same example, rolling 6 on a die, 1 in 6, so 16.67% probability. (or 1:6 probability).

When you express your chance of a draw as probability, which is what you are usually doing when you use a percentage, you must also calculate the pot probability. This is why you must include your call in the total, It's part of the total number of outcomes.

When the odds are very large, the 1 extra outcome makes little difference. The probability of winning the Lotto is essentially the same as the odds of winning the Lotto (approximately 0). But poker deals with much more realistic odds where mixing odds and probability will cause an appreciable error (Even a getting Royal Flush is only 1:39,000 - long, but not astronomical.)



larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

I agree that calling flop raises with flush draws are not always the most profitable play in the world and something, beginners often do not do particularly well with. I do however think, that using the 4:1 odds of making a flush on the turn as the main decision maker is a bit TO conservative, when all aspects of the situation is considered.

1. Some flush-draws will have added equity from overcards or maybe a gut-shot straightdraw or a made pair, so not all flush draws are created equally. An A-high flush draw is also worth more than a 7-high flush draw, because the first offer implied odds from other players making a lower flush, while the latter offer mostly reverse implied odds from other players making a higher flush. And it can also easily be beaten by any player holding a higher card than 7, if a 4-flush comes on the deck.
2. Not all flop raisers will follow up with another raise on the turn. Particularly if the raiser is out of position, he might get a bit unsecure about his own hand, when someone call his flop-raise and just check the turn, which is of course excellent, if you still only have a draw, since you then get to see the last card for free. So playing draws in position is definitely better than playing them out of position.

3. Finally implied odds are also a factor, which need to be considered. Monotone coloured boards are not the easiest in the entire world to get paid on, since they are very easy to see, and many players fear flushes to a sometimes almost irrational extent. But still you will get paid at least something at least sometimes, when you hit your flush, as players might find it difficult to part from a strong hand like two pair or a set in particular, and therefore they will make a cry call, even they know, they could be behind to a flush.

So all in all I think, that it is justifiable to call a "standard" 2/3 pot size bet on the flop with a flushdraw as the general rule, or at least with the stronger flush draws, even though the 4:1 odds calculation would suggest to always fold it. And if you have a proper starting hand selection, then you won't have many weak flush draws in the first place, since you will not play 94 suited or J2 suited, unless you get a free roll from the big blind. So with proper starting hand selection you will very rarely find yourself in that awkward situation, where you need to decide, if you should call a flop bet with a 9 high flush draw and no added equity whatsoever.

I will usually not call a pot size bet though, because it usually indicates a very strong hand, that the raiser will most likely bet very strongly on the turn as well, typically 2 pair or better. And in that situation it really gets to expensive to chase after a flush, that will only happen about 40% of time, and will not even always be good, because sometimes the aggressive raiser will improve from 2 pair or a set to a full house.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 7 years ago

Quick question.

"The fact that our opponent has bet again has reduced our pot odds so much that it has made our call on the flop unprofitable. This is because if we now call the bet on the turn, we would have effectively paid \$120 into what became a \$200 pot, which changes our pot odds to 1.7:1."

i figured out that this 200 comes from 80pot + 120 opponent total raise. But i dont understand why should I work with odds of 200 instead of 240. Why we dont count that 40call of ours, so then we would have effectively paid \$80

into what became a \$240 pot, which changes our pot odds to 3:1 ?

I mean its like nothin is changing here this way.

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Sklansky Dollars

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#)

Sklansky dollars (or Sklansky bucks) is a mathematical concept coined by the humble [David Sklansky](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Sklansky) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Sklansky).



The origin of this concept is a bit of a mystery, although I'm sure it's from one of Sklansky's books. Either way, it's a very well-known concept that highlights how much money you expect to win on average from calling all-ins in Texas Holdem.

What are "Sklansky dollars"?

"Sklansky dollars" tells you how much money you expect to win from the pot based on your equity at that point in the hand.

Sklansky dollars are imaginary, but they are useful for evaluating how much money you effectively win from the hands you play. Sklansky bucks are worked out as follows:

$$\text{Sklansky Dollars} = [(\text{total pot size}) * (\text{equity})] - \text{last call amount}$$

Sounds a little complicated, but it's really not all that bad. The best way to explain this concept is through an example.

Sklansky dollars example.

Let's say we're playing \$100NL against an [aggressive \(/strategy/general/aggression/\)](#) opponent.

Our hand: A♦ A♠

Opponent's hand: A♥ K♥

Our opponent ends up pushing all-in before the flop and we make the call, accompanied by a fairly large fist pump. The board comes:

Board: K♠ 2♥ T♠ 7♣ K♦

If your monitor is still intact you will notice that you just **lost your \$100**. However, as you can imagine you're going to win this pot a lot more often than you will lose it, so we both know that this was far from being a bad call.

Sklansky dollars will show us how much money we expect to win from this call on average and remind us that calling is indeed a profitable play over the long run.

Working out Sklansky dollars.

To work out our "Sklansky dollars" we need to:

1. Find out our [equity \(/strategy/mathematics/equity/\)](/strategy/mathematics/equity/) at the point we risked our money
2. Multiply our equity by the total size of the pot
3. Subtract our final bet or call from the final pot size

Steps 1 and 2 are the main components. Step 3 is just an additional one that gives us a number that can be worked with in other calculations.

1) Find our equity in the hand when all the money went in to the middle.

Using [PokerStove \(/tools/software/pokerstove/\)](/tools/software/pokerstove/) we find that we have **87.9% equity in the hand** with A♦ A♠ against A♥ K♥ preflop. Easy enough.

Hand Distribution			Equity
Player 1	R D	AdAs	87.859%
Player 2	R D	AhKh	12.141%

2) Multiply our equity by the size of the pot.

The final pot size was \$200, and our equity in the hand when all the money went in to the middle was 87.9%.

$$\$200 * 0.879 = \$175.8$$

So, even though we missed out on winning that big \$200 pot, on average we will be winning a \$175.8 pot every time we call all-in with A♦ A♠ against A♥ K♥ before the flop.

Note: When I say "multiply our equity by the size of the pot" I mean **find the percentage of the total pot size**. You obviously want to multiply \$200 by 0.879 and not 87.9.

3) Subtract our final bet or call from the final pot size.

We've just lost \$100, but how much will we be earning by making the call over the long run? Just subtract our final call of \$100 from the final pot size:

Sklansky Dollars = \$175.8 - \$100

Sklansky Dollars = \$75.8

Therefore, we expect to win \$75.8 by calling all-in for \$100 with our A♦ A♠ in this spot.

Real money and Sklansky dollars.

In the above example:

- We lost \$100 in real money.
- We won \$75.8 in Sklansky dollars.

Just remember that Sklansky dollars are not real - it's just a \$ representation of how much money you expect to win from a pot on average based on your equity in the hand at that point.

Real dollars tell you how much money you have won or lost in the present, whereas Sklansky dollars tell you how much you have won or lost in the grand scheme of things in poker.

What's the use of Sklansky dollars?

Sklansky dollars is not something you'll consider using in the middle of a hand, unlike pot odds (</strategy/mathematics/pot-odds/>). However, Sklansky dollars is closely linked with expected value (</strategy/mathematics/expected-value/>), and both of these concepts are great for post-session analysis and working out whether or not the way you played a hand was optimal.

Another friendly aspect of Sklansky dollars is that it's great for a bit of reassurance. Even though you may have lost a hand due to [variance \(/strategy/other/variance/\)](/strategy/other/variance/), your actions may well have been profitable nonetheless. That's always nice to know.

Over a long enough period of time your Sklansky dollar earnings will equal your real money earnings. Real money winnings are greatly affected by variance.

In my opinion the most valuable aspect of "Sklansky dollars" is that it helps to prevent bad beats from getting to you and affecting your play. A bad player will see the above example as a \$100 loss and nothing more. A good player will see the same hand as a great play that will win a lot of money over the long run, regardless of the short term results.

Sklansky dollars and the fundamental theorem.

Sklansky dollars also tie in with the [fundamental theorem of poker \(/strategy/theorems/fundamental/\)](/strategy/theorems/fundamental/):

- Every time your opponent makes a mistake, you win Sklansky dollars.
- Every time you make a mistake, you lose Sklansky dollars.

Nothing really groundbreaking here, but it just goes to show that in a perfect game of poker with no variance, you would win money by making correct plays (as opposed to [making mistakes \(/videos/splitsuit/common-mistakes-1/\)](/videos/splitsuit/common-mistakes-1/)) if you were able to see your opponent's cards.

Summary.

"Sklansky dollars" just throws luck and variance out of the window and tells you how much money you expect to win on average from your all-in hands.

This article is longer than it really needs to be, as "Sklansky dollars" (or Sklansky bucks, whatever you want to call it) is a really simple concept to be honest. I hope I didn't drag the life out of it for you - I just wanted to be thorough.

And if you didn't already notice, the method for working out Sklansky Bucks is very similar to the method for [calculating expected value \(/strategy/mathematics/expected-value/calculate/\)](/strategy/mathematics/expected-value/calculate/) -- they're closely related.

Hopefully your newfound knowledge of this concept helps you to accept the fact that bad beats happen, and that you're going to be winning more money than you lose when you get your money in with the best of it.

For more concepts and theories from Sklansky, check out my articles on [the gap concept \(/strategy/concepts/gap-concept/\)](/strategy/concepts/gap-concept/) and the [fundamental theorem of poker \(/strategy/theorems/fundamental/\)](/strategy/theorems/fundamental/).

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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?

Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE. AT THE BEGINING YOU SAID THE OPPONENT HAVE AK HEARTS BUT THE BOARD SHOWED ANOTHER HEART OF K?????

G

Greg

0 points · 12 years ago

Ha ha yes, nice spot. Was meant to be a diamond and not a heart. Thanks for pointing that out, I changed it.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

Ye, very nice, but Sklansky bucks (or EV line in HEM) just doesn't tell you the whole story. You're playing against a range of hands, not against your opponents whole cards. If you get it in preflop with KK against AA it's no bad play, even though you are losing according to Sklansky bucks by doing so.

I

Ilikebicycle

0 points · 12 years ago

This article isn't talking about "bad" play. It's talking about unprofitable play. While you may think that a certain move by a certain player in a certain situation is "bad," this has no outcome on the profitability of an exact play.

The best player is the superuser, the one who can see the other man's cards, and when seeing the other player's cards, KK, he would have folded his Aces to the Kings of his opponent.

As the observer of the particular hand in this article, you deemed it "bad," and you are not the first poker player to say this.

N

nlcatter

0 points · 6 years ago

expect and actual vary - VARIANCE

you can throw heads 100 in a row and still be random

and lose AA < 72 80 in row

?

Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

Can we use the bucks to buy bitcoins?

?

Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

This is very confusing, sure everything is easy as cake when you know your opponents hole cards, but that rarely happens. I wish people who write this nonsense would use real examples that actually can happen while playing. All I have learned here is that its really easy to find the percentage with pokerstove if I know what the other guy is holding. To me, thats completely useless.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 9 years ago

Confusing huh.... maybe you should stick to checkers

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Home ► Strategy ► Mathematics ► Implied Odds ►

Implied Odds

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

I like to think that I explain implied odds a little simpler in the [guide \(/guide/\)](#) section. Try [basic implied odds \(/guide/math/implied-odds/\)](#).

Implied odds are an extension of [pot odds \(/strategy/mathematics/pot-odds/\)](#) that help you decide whether or not a drawing hand is worth calling in the face of a raise. Essentially, the **implied odds** of a hand tell you how much you expect to win after you make your draw.

- If you expect to win a lot more money from your opponent after you make your draw, you have **good implied odds**.
- If you anticipate that you will not be able to get any more money out of your opponent on future rounds, then you have **little or no implied odds**.



Implied odds indicate the amount of money that you expect to win after completing your draw.

Differences between implied odds and pot odds.

Unlike in pot odds, there are no simple mathematical rules or formulas to determine what your implied odds are in [Texas Hold'em \(/\)](#) (although you can work out how much you *need to win* from the rest of the hand to make calling profitable, which is shown later in this article).

With implied odds you pretty much make an estimate of implied odds through an understanding of your opponent and the situation. For this reason it is easier to get an idea of your implied odds during a hand if you have been playing the game for some time.

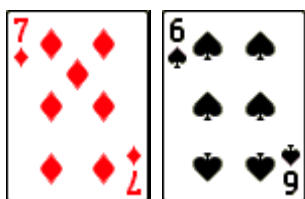
The more you play, the more you will learn about implied odds in drawing hands and eventually it will be easier to make an accurate estimation of your "implied odds".

However, if you are quite new to the game and this is the first time you have come across implied odds, here are two situations below that will help to illustrate:

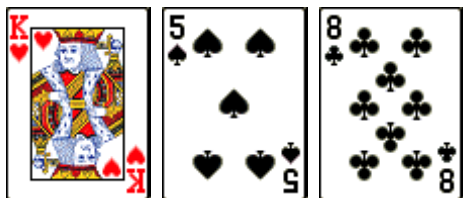
1. The times when you have good implied odds
2. The times when you have little or no implied odds.

Good implied odds situation.

You:



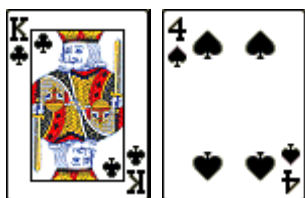
Flop:



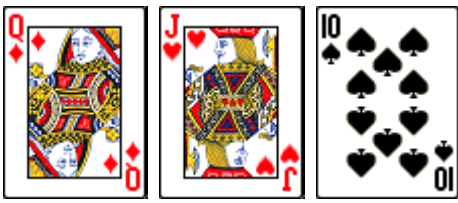
In this hand you have an open ended straight draw. If your opponent bets into you, then you have *good implied odds* because if you make your straight, it is likely that you will be able to extract more money from your opponent on later rounds of betting. This is because your opponent will not easily be able to estimate the strength of your hand.

Poor implied odds situation.

You:



Flop:



Once again you have an open ended straight draw. However your **implied odds are far worse** in this situation because if you do make your straight when the Ace or 9 comes, the board will be very scary for your opponent as the board could easily (and obviously) make somebody the straight. There is little chance that you will get much more money out of your opponents unless they have the straight also.

| **In general, the more disguised your hand is, the better your implied odds are.**

How do implied odds affect your game?

The great thing about implied odds is that they have a knock on effect against your pot odds (</strategy/mathematics/pot-odds/>). If you anticipate you will win more money from your opponent on later rounds of betting, you can afford to make calls when your opponent is not giving you the correct pot odds to call.

For example, if you have the nut straight draw the odds that you will complete the draw on the next card are roughly 5 to 1. If your opponent bets \$25 making the pot \$100, they are giving you 4 to 1 odds to call. Now if we to base our decision purely on pot odds then we should not make the call. However, if we believe that we have good implied odds, the call becomes justifiable. This is because we will be making more money when we make our draw, than if we folded.

The fundamental rules of implied odds to remember are:

- If you have good implied odds, you can afford to call without correct pot odds.
- If you have little or no implied odds, you should stick to the pot odds.

Calculating implied odds.

Even though it is not possible to calculate how much you are going to win with your implied odds, **it is possible to calculate how much you *need to win* to make calling profitable**. This calculation is also very straight forward.

| **Subtract your pot odds from the odds of hitting your draw to work out your required implied odds.**

This will then give us a new ratio that we can compare with the amount we have to call to figure out how much money we need to take from our opponent later on in the hand to make the call profitable (or break even).

Implied odds calculation example.

Let's say that we have a flush draw and our opponent bets \$10 in to a \$10 pot, which means we have to call \$10 to win a \$20 pot.

- **Odds of completing our draw:** 4.2:1 (see the [ratio odds chart \(/tools/odds-charts/ratio/\)](/tools/odds-charts/ratio/)).
- **Pot odds:** 2:1.
- Draw odds - pot odds = **2.2:1**.

So our required implied odds ratio is **2.2:1**. If we multiply this **2.2** figure by the **\$10** bet we have to call we get **\$22**.

Therefore, to make calling the \$10 bet with our flush draw a break-even play at worst, we need to extract \$22 from our opponent during the remainder of the hand.

Conclusion.

Implied odds are useful for deciding whether to call a bet after you have calculated the pot odds. If you do not have the correct odds to call a bet and make your draw, then a call is justifiable if you have good implied odds. However you should stick to the pot odds if you anticipate that you have little or no implied odds.

It should be noted that you have no implied odds if your opponent is all-in, because there will be no betting on further rounds if nobody else in the pot. Be sure to be careful when calling large raises, as the implied odds that you are getting may not cover the amount you have to call in order to make your draw. The best way to obtain a greater understanding of your pot odds and implied odds is to simply play more poker.

For the next article on everything odds in poker, have a read over [reverse implied odds \(/strategy/mathematics/reverse-implied-odds/\)](/strategy/mathematics/reverse-implied-odds/).

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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A **Anna Larsen**
0 points · 7 years ago

This is really very good explanation of the implied odds and its calculation. Thanks for sharing. It will surely gonna help newbies like me who are not very much aware about it.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

wait sorry im kinda new to poker. this information above is really helpful but i still dont quite get it. ca someone please simplify the lesson above for me?

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 11 years ago

hi Greg, i am working out the implied odds but i cannot understand something.

let's round the 4.2:1 to 4:1 so that it becomes 20%

this would mean, that:

- 80 times out of 100 i loose my 10\$, total lost = 800
- 20 times out of 100 i win 22\$, total won 440

but... shouldn't this be "even"?

...or maybe is it because my 10\$ are not all outside odds... just a part of them and we are trying to recap just the "outside odds" part of it...

i would guess the difference is in odds: $800 - 440 = 360$ (divided by 80 = 4.5\$ every hand)

so in my 10\$ there are 4.5\$ "in odds" and 5.5\$ "outside odds", something like that?

any help will be greatly appreciated!

N 0 points · 11 years ago

First of all, don't round 4.2 to 4, use 42% and 58%, second of all, if u are gunna round to 4, its 25% not 20% makes a big difference.

B **Brandon Michael**
0 points · 10 years ago

Sorry sir, but that is not correct. A ratio means that there is a certain percentage that is "for" you and a certain percentage that is "against" you. So 4:1 against you means the probability of you hitting is 20%, NOT 25%. Easiest way to illustrate this is that if you are a 4:1 underdog in a hand, that means you are 20% favorite to win the hand and your opponent is 80% favorite to win the hand. The percents will always add up to 100%.

Also, I'd love to know where you came up with 42% and 58%. Neither of those are anywhere near the percentages of this example. Those would be closer to the 1.5:1 range (not exact, but close). You can absolutely round 4.2 to 4 given his example for simplicity's sake. This isn't high school math class, you don't need 100% exact answers. You need good estimations on the fly. If you take too long, someone could call "clock" on you (or, if you're playing online, you could run out of time). 4.2:1 comes out to roughly 19.2% to 80.8%.....pretty darn far off of 20% to 80% --

L **larskyhnau**
0 points · 11 years ago

When you win, you also win the 20\$, that was in the pot, before you called the 10\$ bet, making a total win of 840\$ not 440\$ using your own slightly rounded of math.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 13 years ago

Hey,
First off your site is awesome. You have a real handle on the economy of language, and explaining things so people get it.

What I'm wondering if there is an equation you can use % to calculate the amount of money needed to make calling profitable in an implied odds situation e.g.(4.2:1 is roughly 18% represents flush draw, and 33% of the pot. Now what would one due with the figures of 18% and 33% do we have to convert it to a ratio, or is there another way?

bu

G **Greg**
0 points · 13 years ago

Thanks, I really appreciate it!

I'm sure there must be a way to work it out using percentages, but I can't seem to figure it out. I'll give it more thought and ask around to find out what the method is.

G **Greg**
0 points · 13 years ago

It can be done, but it requires an EV calculation that can't really be done on the fly as easily as the ratio method unfortunately. Nonetheless, after rearranging the EV equation, this is how you work out how much money you need to win to make calling break even (using percentages instead of ratios):

THE EQUATION: $\$ \text{ Need To Win} = (\text{Bet Size} - \text{Equity}) / \text{Card Odds}$

Bet Size = The size of the bet you're facing.

Card Odds = Your percentage odds of completing your draw. Be sure to use decimals (e.g. 0.191 instead of 19.1%) when working out stuff like equity.

Equity = Your equity of the current size of the pot (including your potential call) according to the odds of making your draw. e.g. $0.191 \times \$40 = \7.64

So here's an example using the information from before:

$\$ \text{ Need To Win} = (\text{Bet Size} - \text{Equity}) / \text{Card Odds}$

$\$ \text{ Need To Win} = (\$10 - [0.191 \times \$40]) / 0.191$

$\$ \text{ Need To Win} = \12.36

If we compare this to the original ratio method:

Pot odds = 3 to 1

Card odds = 4.2 to 1

Card odds - Pot odds = 1.2 to 1

$\$ \text{ Need To Win} = 1.2 \times \10

$\$ \text{ Need To Win} = \12

This is all assuming that we're on the flop waiting for the turn with a flush draw. Therefore, we need to win an extra \$12.36 at least on the turn and/or river for a call on the flop to break even.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 13 years ago

Thanks so much Greg!

This helps me conceptualize better. I can see how practically it is necessary to use the ratio method, *sigh*.

Also one more quick clarity question, when referring to the amount needed to be exacted (e.g. the \$12.36) is that figure solely the amount needed to be extracted from your opponent(s) or is it that \$12.36 total meaning \$6.16 can be prospectively be from your stack ,and \$6.16 be from his stack if your heads-up?

G **Greg**
0 points · 13 years ago

No problem, glad I could help! I did write the derivation down somewhere, so if you'd like for me to run through that too just let me know.

The \$12.36 is what you need to win from your opponent(s) only. So any money you put in to the pot would not contribute to that amount.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 7 years ago

Could you please explain where that \$40 came from? The pot was \$10 before \$10 bet and my \$10 call? That makes it \$30 after I call? BTW is there some way to convert outs into a ratio directly, without figuring out the percentage and then converting to ratio?

?

Anonymous

0 points · 7 years ago

Would this be mathematically correct way to estimate our "implied EV"? Let's say the pot is 3, we have one pair and expect our opponent to have a higher pair. We have 5 outs to upgrade to two pairs or trips. Our opponent is betting 1 now and we expect another bet of 5 next street. Our EV is: $(([pot] + [bet + call] + [future bet]) * [equity]) - [investment/call] = (3+2+5 * 0.11) - 1 = 0.1$.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

How can i get my opponet to bet? What if he does bet?

L

larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

Implied odds can also come from your opponent calling your bet. In the example with good implied odds, maybe your opponent is raising with AK or KQ, so he has top pair and a good kicker.

And maybe he will treat his hand as show-down value and check the turn and river, if you call his flop-bet. Many tighter players will in fact do just that. But it is not very likely, that he will fold to a reasonably sized raise from you, when he have such a strong hand, and the board still looks relatively "safe", even if a 4 or 9 hits on the turn or river.

So there are definitely implied odds in that situation from nearly all players. You just need to be aware, that most players have elastic calling ranges. So while he might be willing to call a single 2/3 pot size bet from you with such a strong pair, maybe he wont call 2/3 pot size bets on BOTH the turn and river, and maybe he wont call a 1,5 or 2,0 pot size overbet either.

So while it would be wonderfull to get your entire stack inside, when you have the absolut nuts in the form of a straight on a board, that does not allow either higher straights, flushes or full house, you need to be at least a bit balanced in your bet sizing and not go completely crazy. Because that will definitely set alarm

bells ringing in your opponents head about what hand, you might have, that you want to play so strongly.

G

Greg

0 points · 12 years ago

You can't force your opponent to bet. All you can do is take an educated guess on the likelihood of your opponent betting based on their past betting patterns. If it's unlikely that your opponent is going to bet for whatever reason, your implied odds if you hit aren't going to be great, and there's not a lot you can do about that.

If your opponent does bet when you hit your draw, fantastic. You can either call or raise. It's impossible to say whether calling or raising is the best option as it's very situation-specific. You just have to again try and work out whether calling or raising is going to make you the most money over the long run, and that kind of knowledge comes from experience.

Hope that helps!

?

Anonymous

0 points · 9 years ago

Its really nice

posting. I think it would be helpful for all. It should be noted that you have. Thank you for sharing with us. [Sticking to Poker Basics \(http://www.oddsandpots.com/basics-of-poker/\)](http://www.oddsandpots.com/basics-of-poker/).

?

Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

So what happens then if your draw odds are 2.5 to 1 and your pot odds are 3.0 to 1. You would have a negative required implied odds so that would be a zero for required implied odds correct ?

?

Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

Implied odds is a way to justify making a bad pot odds call, if you are getting good pot odds on your draw then you don't need to factor in implied odds.

J

John Duke

0 points · 9 years ago

I think Beddelol the most important thing they said here is knowing your opponent, if you are playing a fish 95% of the time they are going to call you to the river. If you stick to the % 98% of the time over the long haul you will always make money. Even when you are chasing the odds have almost always got to be in your

favour. EX: opponent pocket Aces you th jh flop Qh-9h-2s so you are on up & down minus the 2 hearts & 9h=15 outs=62% now there is \$200 in the pot now your opponent puts you all in for your last \$2000. end of tournament if you do not hit, do you call i would not. If his bet is \$20. absolutely

?

Anonymous

0 points · 9 years ago

Hi Greg,

I have question. If we take your example from „ Implied odds calculation" there we have 4.2:1 =19% chance to hit our flush and 2:1=33% real pot odds to continue drawing so we have 19% of 30\$ (pot after we call)= 6\$ and 33%of 30\$=10\$. If we make this calculations it means that we need to make our opponet pay us 4\$ to break even(10\$- 6\$=4\$)?

N

Navrark

0 points · 10 years ago

Let's take the following scenario:

Buddy bets the flop and I call with a flush draw. The odds to get a flush are 4:1. I have to call \$0.10 into \$0.23. That means I'm short \$0.17. I make the call.

So now buddy bets on the turn after I miss my flush. He bets \$0.20 into a \$0.33 pot. Now I've made back the \$0.17 I lost right? Right? Wrong?

If I want to continue now I have to call a \$0.20 bet into a \$0.53 pot. So if I want another try at my flush I need an \$0.80 pot, so if I call now I'll be short \$0.27.

Now my question is this: Did I make back the \$0.17 I lost on the flop, on the turn? or do I now have to make back \$0.17 + \$0.27 on the River? Or just \$0.27 on the River?

G

Greg

0 points · 10 years ago

\$0.17 + \$0.27

You made another -EV play on the turn. This just adds to the amount of money you need to "win back" on later streets to try and turn your bad call in to a profitable hand overall.

If you had hit your flush on the turn, the money you put in to the pot would be equal to your equity. So if you had the nuts, you would be winning back 100% of every dollar your and your opponent put in to the pot.

If you haven't got a made hand (i.e. a draw), your equity is poor (e.g. 20%) and you're winning back less money than you put in over the long run at this point in the hand. Therefore, this "lost money" needs to be recouped to turn the hand in to a profitable one.

Good question.



Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

So ur saying that if he hit his flush on the turn, he would've already broken even since with 2 cards to come his equity is about 36% (2:1) and he called .10 to a .23 Pot (2:1) and happened to catch it on the turn? Or would he have had to make an additional .17 to break even? I hope I'm making sense :/



Sane_American

0 points · 5 years ago

That's probably not correct exactly because the \$0.27 'make-up' already includes some of the turn \$0.17 make-up (the make-up is for when you make your flush - you can't make your flush twice so counting them both this way is incorrect). Having said that it's not a bad idea to overestimate the make-up because some amount of the time you can make your flush and still lose (to higher flush, set rivering fullhouses, etc.)



Dimitris Kontoleon

0 points · 9 years ago

is general good or bad to bid all in with flush Q when play at list 3 opp in this hand?

I know that is risk to bid if you have low flush(e.g 8,5)



Anonymous

0 points · 9 years ago

there is something about implied odds that i just cannot seem to grasp. here it is:

if i work out the amount of money i need to extract from my opponent to make my current call profitable, lets say its \$22 like the example in the article, isnt it allways profitable to play my draws as long as i make sure my opponent invests \$22 into the future pot? i could simply do this by betting the amount i need and make him call. if he folds, then i won the pot so it didnt matter. if instead he bets \$22 or more and i call, then again i have successfully extracted the money i need from him. so it seems to me i just cant loose xD im guessing that i have left out a very important factor that is messing my logic up, but i cant figure out what that might be. please help.



Anonymous

0 points · 9 years ago

I think, however, i might be mistaken here but if your opponent folds when you bet \$22 and make your draw it isn't profitable because even though you won the pot if you factor in the times when you are in the same situation and do not make the draw and your opponent wins the pot, then overall you would be losing money.

E.g in 26 hands of the same situation you win 5 times and he wins 21 times (multiplied the draw odds by 5

to get integers)

So 5 times you win \$20 $5 \times \$20 = \100

and 21 times you lose the \$10 you bet $21 \times \$10 = \210

So overall you lose $\$100 - \$210 = -\$110$ over the 26 hands

So if you cannot extract a further \$22 from him ($\22×5 (the times you win) = \$110) then you will be losing money.

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Pot Odds Examples.

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#)

[Pot Odds \(/\)](#) > [The Rule of 4 and 2 \(/4-2/\)](#) : Pot Odds Examples

For a lot of players (including myself), the best way to learn about something is through a bunch of examples. So, carrying on from the basics outlined in my [first article on pot odds \(/\)](#), here are a bunch of examples for you to get your teeth in to.



I will be incorporating a little of the concepts of [implied odds \(/strategy/mathematics/implied-odds/\)](#) and [reverse implied odds \(/strategy/mathematics/reverse-implied-odds/\)](#) for good measure. Don't worry though; it's all really straightforward and logical when you get down to it.

The examples.

The answers to the examples have been placed in a show/hide box at the bottom of each example. Try your best to work out whether you should call or fold and why before revealing the answer.

Furthermore, the stakes used in each example are not a reflection of the ability of the players at the table, so don't read too much in to that. These situations just take in to account very general pot odds/implied odds/reverse implied odds strategy. Strategy "in a vacuum" if you will.

Example 1.

Hand: K♣ T♣

Board: A♣ 3♥ 8♣

Pot: \$2

Player A (\$10): Bets \$1.5

Hero (\$10): ?

Final Pot: \$3.5

To Call: \$1.5

[Click to reveal answer.](#)

Example 2.

Hand: A♥ 5♥

Board: J♥ T♠ 7♥

Pot: \$20

Player A (\$100): Bets \$20

Player B (\$100): Calls \$20

Hero (\$100): ?

Final Pot: \$60

To Call: \$20

Notes: We are last to act with the nut flush draw.

[Click to reveal answer.](#)

Example 3.

Hand: 9♠ 8♥

Board: J♥ T♦ A♣

Pot: \$10

Player A (\$50): Bets \$3

Hero (\$50): ?

Final Pot: \$13

To Call: \$3

Notes: Player A raised from late position preflop. We called on the button and everyone else folded.

Click to reveal answer.

Example 4.

Hand: J♠ T♠

Board: A♠ 2♦ 9♠

Pot: \$15

Player A (\$100): Bets \$8

Player B (\$100): Calls \$8

Player C (\$100): Raises to \$20

Hero (\$100): ?

Final Pot: \$51

To Call: \$20

Notes: There are 4 players in the pot (one of those is you). A bets, B calls and C raises. It's up to you to act and both players A and B will also have to act after you in response to C's raise.

Click to reveal answer.

Example 5.

Hand: A♦ Q♦

Board: T♣ 2♥ 4♠

Pot: \$20

Player A (\$100): Bets \$5 All-In.

Hero (\$100): ?

Final Pot: \$25

To Call: \$5

Notes: Player A has moved in for \$5 on the flop. Don't worry about the fact that we probably should have just got it all in preflop, just take it as it is.

Click to reveal answer.

A couple of quick pot odds pointers.

1) **Learn the common odds off by heart.** You will land yourself in so many flush and straight draw situations that there's no need to try and work out the ratio each and every time. It's nice to know the process, but 99% of the time you just need to recall the odds of hitting for the most common draws.

- **Flush draw:** 4:1 (19%)
- **Straight draw:** 5:1 (17%)

2) **You can actually call a little more than pot odds alone will allow on the flop more often than not.** Very generally speaking, if you're on the flop with a draw there is a very good chance that more money will be going in to the pot on the turn and river, even when you hit some of the most obvious draws. Therefore, this extra money makes up for the lack of pot odds over the long run.

Just as long as you're careful not to use this as an excuse to call with ridiculously bad odds, you should be fine calling for a flush draw when you are getting pot odds of 3.5:1 when your odds of hitting are 4:1. You can work out how much money you need to extract from your opponent when calling without the right pot odds using the formula in the implied odds article.

Pot odds examples evaluation.

Practice makes perfect. Keep practicing.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy_\(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

Comments

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?

Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

خیلی خوب بود

P

pre-fab

0 points · 6 years ago

Where are the answers for these? I don't see any show/hide boxes (on Firefox or Safari).

S

Scott

0 points · 12 years ago

Cheers really helped now I've read the other one as well!

B

bakpinar

0 points · 10 years ago

great article and examples, im a beginner, playing in micro stake tables at the moment, \$0.02/0.05. Trying to apply the +EV in my games.

Lets say, im in position with suited cards in my hand, having a flush or straight draw at flop, player checks. what should i bet? 70% of the pot?

?

Anonymous

0 points · 9 years ago

On example 5. The pot odds are 5:1 and your odds of winning are roughly 6.8:1. Wouldnt you fold because pot odds arent high enough?

P

pre-fab

0 points · 6 years ago

The villain went all in, so the percentage is closer to 24% (not 12%) because the hero will be getting to see two cards. Hero should definitely call.

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The Rule of 4 and 2.

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

[Pot Odds \(/\)](#) > *The Rule of 4 and 2* : [Pot Odds Examples \(/examples/\)](#)

The rule of 4 and 2 (or the 2/4 rule, whatever you want to call it) was coined by Phil Gordon in his [Little Green Book](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1416903674?ie=UTF8&tag=thpoba-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1416903674) (<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1416903674?ie=UTF8&tag=thpoba-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1416903674>), which is an awesome little strategy book for NL Hold'em by the way.

The Rule Of
4 and 2

outs \times 2/4 = %

In this article I will explain what the *rule of 2 and 4* is all about and show you how to use it during play.

What is the rule of 4 and 2?

The rule of 4 and 2 is a quick shortcut for helping you to work out the [percentage odds \(/tools/odds-charts/percentage/\)](#) of completing a draw in Hold'em. To get your percentage odds:

- Multiply your outs by **2** when you are **on the flop waiting for the turn**.
- Multiply your outs by **2** when you are **on the turn waiting for the river**.
- Multiply your outs by **4** when you are **on the flop waiting for the river (opponent is all-in)**.

When you have multiplied your outs by either 4 or 2, you will get a percentage that you can compare with your pot odds to work out whether or not it's worth calling with a drawing hand.

The rule of 4 and 2 just works for percentages odds, not for [ratio odds \(/tools/odds-charts/ratio/\)](#). I'm afraid.

Examples of the 2/4 rule.

- **Flush draw:** 9 outs * 2 = 18%
- **Straight draw:** 8 outs * 2 = 16%
- **Two overcards:** 6 outs * 2 = 12%
- **Two pair and you need to make a full house:** 4 outs * 2 = 8%
- **Flush draw, opponent is all in on flop:** 9 outs * 4 = 36%
- **Straight draw, opponent is all in on flop:** 8 outs * 4 = 32%

Easy stuff really. As long as you know your 2 and 4 times tables you're all set.

Important — You rarely multiply by 4.

Even though it's call the "rule of 4 and 2", it should really be called the "rule of 2 (and 4 on rare occasions)", but that's obviously less catchy. Too many players make the mistake of using the 4 rule on the flop every time, and they lose a lot of money because of it.

The only time you should ever multiply your outs by 4 is when you are on the flop and your opponent has moved all-in. Therefore, you do not expect to face another bet on the turn that will force you to pay more to try and complete your draw.

Basically, always look to multiply your outs by 2 when you are on the flop or the turn to get your correct percentage odds. In the unlikely event that your opponent moves all-in on the flop, then you can dust off the rule of 4 and enjoy its company for a brief moment.

Hand examples of the rule of 4 and 2.

Hand example 1.

You have a flush draw on the flop in a \$0.50/\$1 NL Hold'em game. Your opponent bets \$10 in to the \$10 pot. The pot is now \$20 and you have to call \$10 to continue to try and hit your flush. Should you call or fold?

Hand: A♥ 2♥

Board: J♥ 3♠ 7♥

Final Pot: \$20

To Call: \$10

With a flush draw we have 9 outs, and seeing as we are on the flop waiting for the turn, we will use the "rule of 2".

- Odds of completing our flush: 9 outs * 2 = **18%**
- Pot odds: **33%** (\$30 pot total including our call. \$10 is 33% of \$30.)

Note: Don't forget to add your potential call to the pot size when working out percentage odds. It's a little different to the way we work out ratio odds I know, but try and get used to it. Look over the [pot odds \(../\)](#) article to remind yourself.

The odds of completing our flush are worse than the odds we are getting from the pot, therefore we should fold. To put it another way, we do not want to call more than 18% of the pot size to continue, so we *fold*.

Hand example 2.

You have two overcards on the flop in a \$0.50/\$1 NL Hold'em game. Your opponent moves all-in for \$10 in to the \$30 pot. The pot is now \$40 and you have to call \$10 to continue. Should you call or fold?

Hand: A♥ Q♠

Board: J♦ 3♣ 7♥

Final Pot: \$30

To Call: \$10

It's one of those rare occasions where our opponent is all in on the flop, so time to whip out that "rule of 4" for once. Let's also assume that if we pair one of our overcards that we will definitely have a better hand than our opponent.

- Odds of winning: 6 outs * 4 = **24%**
- Pot odds: **20%** (\$50 pot total including our call. \$10 is 20% of \$50.)

As it turns out, our odds of winning this hand are better than the odds we are getting from the pot; therefore it is profitable for us to call in an attempt to make an overpair in this example. To put it another way, we can call up to 24% of the pot size to continue, so we *call*.

Rule of 4 and 2 accuracy comparison tables.

Just so you can get an idea of how accurate the rule of 4 and 2 is, here are two tables that compare the percentage odds you get using the rule of 4 and 2 and the *actual percentage odds* for the most common types of draws in Texas Hold'em.

Rule of 4 accuracy table.

Outs	4 and 2	Actual	Difference
4 (gutshot)	16%	16.5%	-0.5%
8 (straight)	32%	31.5%	+0.5%
9 (flush)	36%	35%	+1%
15 (straight + flush)	60%	54.1%	+5.9%

The percentage odds are impressively close when using the rule of 4 (i.e. when your opponent is all-in on the flop and there are two cards to come).

The only draw that's noticeably off is the straight + flush draw when you have 15 outs (5.9% difference), but that doesn't really matter because when you've got a greater than 50% chance of winning the pot it makes it +EV (/strategy/mathematics/expected-value/) to call absolutely any size bet anyway.

Rule of 2 accuracy table.

The rule of 2 can be used on both the flop and the turn. So to keep things simple, in the following table I'll just compare the percentage odds for when we are **on the turn waiting for the river**.

Outs	4 and 2	Actual	Difference
4 (gutshot)	8%	8.7%	-0.7%
8 (straight)	16%	17.4%	-1.4%
9 (flush)	18%	19.6%	-1.6%
15 (straight + flush)	30%	32.6%	-2.6%

Not bad, although not quite as accurate as the rule of 4.

Still, if the rule of 2 stops you from fumbling around with working out the exact odds and in turn accidentally making a bad decision then it has done its job. Furthermore, 1% or 2% under the actual odds is hardly going to lead you to making a terrible play, so I honestly wouldn't worry about it.

Note: The percentage odds when using the rule of 2 on the flop are slightly more accurate than when you're using the rule on the turn (as shown in the table above).

Evaluation of the rule of 4 and 2.

The 2/4 rule is as good as rule are you are going to get for quickly working out percentage odds with drawing hands.

As long as you know how to work out pot odds as a percentage and you prefer working with percentages over ratios, this is the most useful rule you could hope to find.

As far as accuracy goes, the actual percentages are very close to the percentages the rule of 4 and 2 gives out. There are obviously differences of around 1% either side for most draws, but **the difference is not big enough to worry about in my opinion**. The simplicity and speed that the rule offers more than makes up for the slight decrease in accuracy with odds.

In my [main article on pot odds](#) (../). I preferred to use the "rule of 2" *plus 1*, which is ever so slightly more accurate. At the end of the day though, the rule of 4 and 2 is the quickest shortcut method that you're ever going to find for working out percentage odds without taking a much longer route for a similar result.

Phil Gordon also coined the [Gordon Pair Principle](/tools/odds-charts/gordon-pair-principle/) (/tools/odds-charts/gordon-pair-principle/).

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy](/strategy/) (/strategy/).

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D **DoneLV**
0 points · 4 years ago

In 2nd example - essentially for odds calculation we don't care if other players might already have 3 of a kind (3x J, 3 or 7) on the flop thus beating our pair?

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 11 years ago

Hi, I wanted to ask how to use this rule if the opponent goes all-in not on the flop, but ON THE TURN WAITING FOR THE RIVER? Thanks.

G **Greg**
0 points · 11 years ago

If anything happens on the turn, use the rule of 2. There is only one card to come, so the fact that your opponent moved all in makes no difference to the odds. So to answer your question – you want to use the rule of 2.

On the flop, use the rule of 2 unless your opponent moves all in. If your opponent moves all in, then use the rule of 4. That is the only time you want to use the rule of 4, and you'll only ever need to use it on the flop.

So:

On the flop: Use the rule of 2 (rule of 4 if opponent moves all in)

On the turn: use the rule of 2

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 9 years ago

A better formula for the 4 rule when the outs are higher than 8:

$NO \times 4 - (NO - 8)$, where NO = Number of Outs.

Examples:

9 (flush): $9 \times 4 - (9 - 8) = 36 - 1 = 35\%$

15 (straight+flush): $15 \times 4 - (15 - 8) = 60 - 7 = 53\%$

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 10 years ago

Hi,

I'm a poker beginner and have some confusion on calculating outs. On hand example 2, we hold an ace and a queen. There is a jack on the flop so shouldn't we also add 4 tens and 4 kings to our number of outs, which will help us make an ace high straight?

G

Greg

0 points · 10 years ago

You're right – there's certainly a chance that a Ten AND a King could come out on the turn AND the river.

But that's a lot more complicated to work out, as you require TWO specific cards to come out. In the example above, we're just hoping for an Ace OR a Queen to come out on the turn OR river.

I only intended for the example to be a simple one, where we're looking for any kind of out to appear on either betting round. The rule of 2 and 4 is good for these situations (and they're by far the most common).

Factoring in the T+K scenario for a straight is a bit more complicated (and unlikely), so I ignored it for this particular example. But you're not wrong with your question – I just ignored didn't account for that result. Maybe I should have chosen an example with less possibilities.

A key point to remember though is that you can't always figure out every possible outcome in the middle of a hand. When it comes to working out odds on the fly, you're usually only going to think about the most likely outcomes and work with those to give you a rough (but still usable) estimation of the odds.

This is why the 4-2 rule is popular for players getting started with working with odds. It's not exact poker math – it's more like a handy shortcut. You can find more precise odds using equity calculators:

<http://www.thepokerbank.com...> (<http://www.thepokerbank.com/tools/software/pokerstove/>).

<http://www.pokercruncher.com/> (<http://www.pokercruncher.com/>).

Thanks for asking. Hope I didn't make things more complicated for you haha. Just keep playing with numbers and you'll get there. It's one of those things that doesn't make sense until it does. You just need to keep exposing yourself to it.

Good luck.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

how can £10 be 20% of £50 and how can £10 33% 50 can you please post how to work this out please! thank.

jay.

G

Greg

0 points · 13 years ago

To find the percentage, you simply divide the little number number by the big number, then multiply by 100. For example:

$$\$10 / \$50 = 0.2$$

$$0.2 * 100 = 20\%$$

$$\$10 / \$30 = 0.33$$

$$0.33 * 100 = 33\%$$

This is easy enough if you have a calculator, but to work out percentages on the fly I like to first find 10% of the bigger number and then try and match it up to the smaller number by adding or taking away percentages. For example:

- Let's say I want to find what \$20 is as a percentage of \$50.
- I'll start by finding 10% of \$50, which is \$5. This is easy enough as to find 10% you just divide the big number by 10.
- \$20 is made up of four \$5's, so if I add four \$5's together the total percentage turns out to be 40%.

I hope that makes some sense. Here's a good article on working out percentages:

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/money/reader_guides/article5940174.ece

?

Anonymous

0 points · 7 years ago

Hi,

In your Hand eg 2, if you use the ratio method, you shouldn't call.

as...

6 outs are there to improve the hand, which would mean 41:6 (roughly 7:1)

whilst the pot odds is 4:1 (40\$ in the pot & 10\$ to call).

Referring to your previous blog article <http://www.thepokerbank.com/strategy/mathematics/pot-odds/>

and using the ratio method, you should fold this hand.

These 2 ways of calculating the odds are confusing to use in any situation...kindly explain the same.

W

Whammer999

0 points · 11 years ago

Question on Example 2. I get where you would call the bet using pot odds being they're lower than the winning %. But if you use the ratio odds, those are at 25%, almost equal to the % to win. What should be used, ratio or pot odds? If ratio, is the rule the same where if the ratio is higher than % to win, you fold? Sorry if this is a dumb question, just trying to wrap my head around this info (which is great info!).

?

Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

Hi,

Re: "Hand example 1." - flush draw, should we add 3 remaining aces to outs calculation in addition to 9 outs to complete flush? It would be top pair anyway and probably could be the best hand in many cases. Anyway it is still a decision to fold, but if pot odds would be 22%?

What about back door straight, I mean A 2 3 and remaining 4 and 5 to finish straight? Should we adjust somehow our outs?

p.s. Thanks for this material, I found it very usefull.

G **Greg**
0 points · 12 years ago

You're right, we could consider adding those 3 aces as outs in that first example. I just kept that example very straightforward and stuck with the outs that would definitely give us the best hand.

As you can guess, the main problem with counting those aces as outs is if our opponent has any AX hand, as even if we do hit an ace we will be behind. So these are not "clean outs" and are worth discounting for the most part. I'd think of hitting an ace and making a better hand as a bonus, rather than a legitimate route to improving and winning the pot.

The back door straight is a possibility too and increases our equity a little, but it's not really possible to factor this in to the rule of 4 and 2 unfortunately. Just like the aces, I'd count this as a very small increase to our probability of winning the hand.

For example, I'd start off with the 9 clean outs that give us 18%. Then by factoring in the overcard and backdoor straight you could say that your actual equity is closer to around 20% or 21%. This is very much based on "feel" haha, but hopefully you understand what I'm trying to say.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

These examples are inconsistent with what you posted in the previous section on Pot Odds. I explain below.

Hand example 1: You have a flush draw and your opponent bet 10\$ into 10\$, making a final pot of 20\$. This means you can win 20\$ to call 10\$, or 2:1 pot odds. It makes little sense to add your call money into the pot as these are your money already, you can just as well keep them by folding.

In other words, if you add your call \$ to the final pot, you should also consider the following: you have 10\$ to call, but if you fold you won't lose 10\$ (your call money), or 100% "fold odds" - which is obviously a false line of thinking.

Hand example 2: Opponent moves 10\$ (all in) into 30\$, making a final pot of 40\$. You must call 10\$ for a chance to win 40\$, giving you 4:1 odds making this call just unprofitable in the long run (note that card odds are 24%<25%).

G **Greg**
0 points · 11 years ago

When you work with percentage odds you add your own call.

When you work with ratio odds you don't add your own call.

It's confusing I know. I've made this mistake a ridiculous amount of times.



Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

but the thing is, if your opponent go all in on the turn, the pot size is about 150, you have to call 75 to win 150 for a flush draw, which gives you 2:1. obviously, this ratio is smaller than 4.11:1, so you should not call. However, if you use 4 2 rule. your odds percentage is 18%, and your pot odd percentage is $(150+75)/75=33.33\%$, which under 4 2 rule we should call this all-in. how you explain this difference?
Thanks



Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

dude u must think before u write... if the pot(EX:2) is @ 40 when the opponent pushes all-in for 10 and you get to see 2 cards then you're getting roughly 1.9:1 on the call a 34% chance of hitting by the riv making it a +ev decision. do your math bfore u talk smack... Greg has the best vids and articles that are free... I'm thankful and so should u, I'm out.



Garrett Burke

0 points · 12 years ago

After further consideration you are right...



Anonymous

0 points · 6 years ago

Hi

I have a question

Why sometimes we calculate equity just by multiplying our out times 4 or 2 without comparing it with the range of opponents hand and sometimes we do it with comparing with our opponents range of hand why?



Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

how do you convert 3.5 to 1 into percentages how do you work this out on paper



Greg

0 points · 13 years ago

Hey Jay,

First of all, I turn this ratio in to a fraction. It's easier to turn a fraction in to a percentage.

To turn a ratio in to a fraction, you simply add the "1" to the bigger number. So for example, the ratio of 3.5 to 1 as a fraction is $\frac{1}{4.5}$ (but basically 4.5 is the number we want to use from here on out). A ratio tells you that if something happens X amount of times, the other thing will happen Y amount of times. By adding the "1" we find out the fraction, which is how many times Y happens out of all the events.

Now to get a percentage, we simply divide 100 by 4.5. This equals 22.2%.

So basically all you do is add the two parts of the ratio together, then divide that number by 100. The only catch is that the ratio has to be X to 1 for this to work, so if you have something like 9 to 2, you want to reduce it down to 4.5 to 1 before moving on.

For what it's worth, 9 to 2 is 18.2% as a percentage. See if you can figure that one out.



Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

Hi thanks greg for the quick reply,
I never did any basic maths in school just add and subtract,
And i am only just learning,time tables fraction e.t.c.
And i have been playing poker for five years.
And .in know i will be a better player knowing how to calculate pot odds,
because i will be able to make the right decisions.Anyway thanks! for the advice



Greg

0 points · 13 years ago

No problem! Stuff like pot odds will definitely be tricky at first if you're not familiar with working out percentages and fractions, but given time and plenty of practice you will get good with it.

Fortunately there's lots of information on the internet for this sort of mathematics, so just keep learning and practicing and you'll get there.

Good luck!



Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

Hi Greg i understand 4 to 1, 5 to1 i just dont understand 4.5 to1
I mean what is the" 5 "out of 4.5 to1 ,And 9 to 2 reduce it down 4.5 to 1 i mean were is the method.
I how do i know how much to reduce it too. As well 7 to 3 or 7 to 3 to 1 and 9 to 5 to 1 and so on .
If you could give me some more examples it would really help me and my friends.
We have search the net just dont know were to start.
I have few of poker maths books to complicated.
Your method seems to be the best just know how to use it
Thanks



Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

can you explain the second example please? how did you get 6 outs?

J

Johny

0 points · 11 years ago

3 A's + 3 Q's (3+3) = 6. 6 outs.

G

Greg

0 points · 10 years ago

Thanks Johny.



Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

I was wondering if you knew why Phil didn't mention anywhere in his book "Multiply your outs by 4 when you are on the flop waiting for the river (opponent is all-in)." What is the Also what is the reasoning behind this statement? Nearly all examples on the internet of the Rule of 4 And 2 don't include this information at all as well as The Little Green book that I have which was printed in 2005.

G

Greg

0 points · 10 years ago

I think Phil should have mentioned it.

The reason is that multiplying by 4 assumes that you're going to see the river card without having to pay any more money than the flop bet you're facing. However, there's a good chance you're going to face a bet on the turn, and if you do the equity you thought you had with 4x will be dangerous over-estimation.

As you say the book was printed in 2005, so if it was printed today I'm sure Phil would include an update.

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Pot Odds

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).[Pot Odds](#) > [The Rule of 4 and 2 \(4-2/\)](#) : [Pot Odds Examples \(examples/\)](#)

Learning how to use **pot odds** puts an incredibly useful weapon in your poker arsenal. Knowledge of this basic concept is fundamental in determining whether or not you will become a winning or losing poker player.



This guide aims to explain how pot odds work and how to effectively incorporate them into your game. **It shouldn't take more than 10 minutes to read this guide from start to finish**, which is pretty good considering it could be saving (and winning) you more money for the rest of your poker career.

What are pot odds?

Pot odds simply involves using the odds or likelihood of winning when on a drawing hand to decide whether or not to call a bet or a raise.

Therefore when you are on a flush or straight draw, you will be able to work out whether or not to call or fold depending on the size of the bet you are facing by making use of pot odds. Pretty handy really.

A familiar situation you will find yourself in [Texas Hold'em \(/\)](#) is holding 2 cards of the same suit with another 2 cards of that suit on the flop. In poker this is called a flush draw or sometimes referred to as a "four flush". We will use this as an example in learning the use of *pot odds*.

Working out pot odds.

There are two ways that you can work out pot odds in Texas Hold'em.

1. Ratio method
2. Percentage method

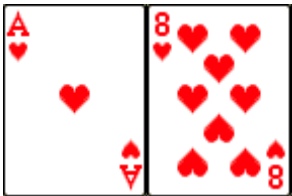
Both of these methods provide the same results, so the one you decide to use is simply a matter of preference.

The **ratio method is the most commonly used method for working out pot odds**, but I personally found the percentage method the easiest to get to grips with when I was calculating pot odds for the first time.

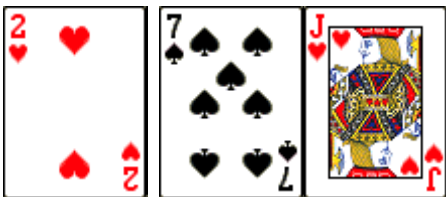
1) Ratio Method.

The majority of books and forums will put pot odds in the ratio format, so it's definitely worth while getting used to this method of calculating and working with pot odds.

You Hold:



Flop:



Now say there are two people left in the pot, you and your opponent. There is \$80 in the pot and your opponent bets \$20. What should you do?

1] Calculating the "card odds".

First of all we need to find out how likely we are to catch another heart on the turn (../../hand-guide/turn/). This can be done in many ways, but the most popular way is to **find the ratio of cards in the deck that we don't want against cards that we do want**.

-
- There are 5 cards in this hand that we know, our 2 holecards and the 3 cards on the flop.
 - This leaves us with 47 cards in the deck that we do not know.

- Out of those 47, there are 9 cards that will make our flush and 38 that will not.
 - If we put this into a ratio it gives us 38:9, or roughly **4:1**.
-

2] Compare with pot odds.

Now we know that the odds of hitting a heart on the next card are 4:1 (our card odds). This means for every 4 times we don't catch a heart, 1 time we will.

Next we calculate the same *ratio* of odds using the **size of the pot** and the **size of the bet**.

-
- Our opponent has bet \$20 into an \$80 pot making it \$100.
 - This means we have to call \$20 to stand a chance of winning \$100.
 - This makes our odds \$100:\$20 which works out to equal **5:1** pot odds.
-

So...

Card Odds: 4:1
Pot Odds: 5:1

This means that we should call as the odds we are getting from the pot are bigger than the odds that we will hit our flush on the next card. In the long run we will be winning more money than we are losing.

Remember! You should only call if the pot odds are greater than the "card odds" (odds of completing your draw).

If finding the card equity by working them out in your head is too time consuming (which most beginners will) . You can find them more quickly by using [odds charts \(/tools/odds-charts/\)](/tools/odds-charts/). These are handy if you print them out and stick them next to your computer and refer to them the next time you end up with a draw.

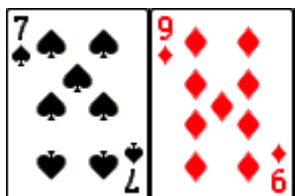
Try [SPOC \(/tools/pokerbank/spoc/\)](/tools/pokerbank/spoc/) if you're just starting out. It's a very handy tool for helping you work out pot odds during play.

2) Percentage Method.

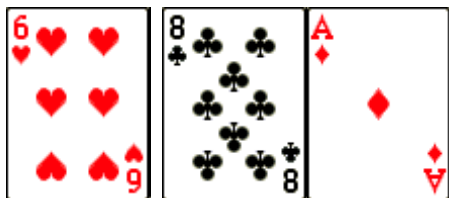
The percentage method was easier for me to get to grips with when I first starting learning pot odds. Unfortunately, it is not as widely used as the ratio method.

For the percentage method I will use an example with a *straight draw*.

You Hold:



Flop:



This time your opponent bets \$30, making the pot \$90 in total (so the pot was originally \$60, but that doesn't matter). We want find out whether or not to call by **finding out the pot odds using percentages**.

1] Finding the "card equity" (same as "card odds", but just using %s).

To find the chance of making the straight on the next card we again need to find the number of outs ('outs' are cards that will complete the hand we are trying to make, in this example we are trying to make a straight.). There are 4 fives and 4 tens that will complete our straight giving, us a total of 8 outs.

To find the percentage chance of making the straight *on the next card* we simply need to **double the outs and add one**.

Finding the percentage "card equity".

- **Double the outs:** $8 * 2 = 16$
 - **Add one:** $16 + 1 = 17\%$
 - **= 17% chance of making the straight**
-

2] Compare with pot odds.

Our opponent has bet \$30 making the pot \$90. This means we have to call \$30 to stand a chance of winning \$120.

As you can see **we have to add our own bet that we will call onto the size of the pot to find the total pot size**. This part is very important, as finding the percentage of \$30 in a \$90 pot will give a very different result than the percentage of \$30 in a \$120 pot. Using basic mathematics we know that \$30 is 25% of the \$120.

So...

Card Equity: 17%

Pot Odds: 25%

As we have already found out we have 17% chance of making the straight on the next card, which means that we should only call 17% of what is in the pot. Because we are being forced to pay 25% to play on, we should **fold**. We would be losing money in the long run if we called.

Remember! You should only call if the percentage chance of making your hand is greater than the percentage of the pot you have to call.

The percentage card equity can also be found in [odds charts \(/tools/odds-charts/\)](/tools/odds-charts/) if you find it easier to use them instead of work them out. These are useful as a guide as you start incorporating pot odds into your game, or if you have trouble working out the odds in the short space of time you are given to make decisions whilst playing online.

Try [playing flush and straight draws \(/guide/math/flush-straight/\)](/guide/math/flush-straight/) for an alternative explanation of using pot odds in poker.

Question: Why are we working out the odds for the *next card only* if there are two cards to come?

Good question. If we are on the flop with a flush draw, our odds of making the best hand **on the turn** are roughly 4 to 1 or 20%. However, seeing as we are on the flop there are indeed 2 more cards to come (and not just the 1), shouldn't the "card equity" be more like 2 to 1 or 40%?

The answer.

Generally, no. This is one of the biggest mistakes players make when using pot odds (</strategy/mathematics/odds-mistakes/>).

The explanation.

When you work out your pot odds, you are comparing the pot odds for the current size of the pot (and bet) to the chances of making your draw on the next card. If you work using the odds of making your draw over the next *two* cards, **you need to factor in any extra money that you will have to pay on the turn also.**

Seeing as it's incredibly unlikely that we're going to accurately guess how much more money we might have to pay on the turn, it's far easier and infinitely more reliable to take it one card at a time. This way, you won't end up paying more money than you should for your drawing hands when on the flop.

The only time that you should ever use the odds for making the best hand over the next two cards combined (e.g. using 2 to 1 odds instead of 4 to 1 odds for a flush draw) is when your only opponent is all-in on the flop. In this instance, you can guarantee that you won't face another bet on the turn, as your opponent has no more money to bet.

I briefly mention this stuff on my percentage odds chart (</tools/odds-charts/percentage/>) and my ratio odds chart (</tools/odds-charts/ratio/>). There is also an explanation in my article on the rule of 4 and 2 for pot odds ([4-2/](#)). It's obviously a very common mistake!

Pot odds evaluation.

Although upon first glance pot odds may appear difficult, it is one of the most basic applications of mathematics in the game of poker. If you base your drawing decisions on pot odds, then you will mathematically be a winner in the long run, regardless of whether or not you win the hand or not.

In addition to deciding whether or not to call, pot odds can be used to influence how much you should bet to "protect" your hand. If you believe your opponent is drawing to a flush then you should bet a large enough sum into the pot to give your opponents the wrong odds to call if you think you have the best hand. Once again, regardless of whether or not your opponent wins the particular hand, they will be losing and you will be winning in the long run.

For another take on explaining pot odds, try this [pot odds guide](http://www.firsttimepokerplayer.com/how-to-play/strategy/texas-holdem-fundamentals/#odds) (<http://www.firsttimepokerplayer.com/how-to-play/strategy/texas-holdem-fundamentals/#odds>) from [FirstTimePokerPlayer.com](http://www.firsttimepokerplayer.com/) (<http://www.firsttimepokerplayer.com/>). There are some very handy tables and examples in this Texas Hold'em strategy section that should help to broaden your understanding of the basics of pot odds in poker.

Note: The pot odds examples used in this guide have been in the situation where you have seen the flop and are waiting to see the turn. The same mathematics can be applied for when you are on the turn waiting to see the river, as both odds are almost exactly the same. However, you should remember that there will be one less unknown card left in the deck when working out the odds because you now know what the turn card is.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy](/strategy/) (</strategy/>).

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? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

Hey Greg/Jamesasher...is there anyway to what card will comes next? ?

G **Greg**
0 points · 12 years ago

Hi there!

There's no exact way to know what card will come next. Each card has an equal probability of being dealt from the deck, so the best thing you can do is work out the odds and make the best decision possible based on those odds.

Does that answer your question?

Greg.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

why do you ADD our own bet into the size of the pot in "Percentage Method" yet not in the "Ratio Method" ?

G

Greg

0 points · 13 years ago

Good question James!

With percentages, you are working out a portion of the total amount of something. For example, if you took 2 apples out of a barrel of 100 apples, you would have 2% of the apples. That's easy. The thing is, you wouldn't say "okay, there are now 98 apples left in the barrel and 2 apples in my hand, what's 2 out of 98 as a percentage?".

The same thing applies to poker. To get the percentage of the total pot amount, you have to add your call to the current pot size. If you don't, you'll be finding a percentage of a smaller amount like you would in the 98 apples example. When you work out a percentage, the total amount always includes your portion, then you go from there.

If we were working with both fraction and percentages, we would be adding our call to the current pot size all the time and it wouldn't seem out of the ordinary. However, because we are working with ratios and percentages, the method for working out ratios is a little different because you are not trying to work out a portion of anything. With ratios, you just compare.

Percentages and fractions are like brother and sister, whereas ratios are more like a cousin. So I guess the question could actually be "why DON'T you add your call to the pot size when working out the ratio?".

Hope that makes sense! Let me know if not though and I'll try and reword it better.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

Sorry 30%

R

Rob

0 points · 10 years ago

Yes. The pot you are faced with is 175. Your calling bet will bring the pot to 250. Your bet is 30% of the pot you have helped create.

Anonymous

? 0 points · 10 years ago

i read down and found its "just" the formula to use on the fly. understood. other questions to apply though. thanks

? Anonymous
0 points · 7 years ago

Ok. So in one example, you say if opponent bets 20 to make the pot 100, our pot odds are 100:20 or 5:1. In the other example, you say the opponent adds 30 to make the pot 90. Based on example 1, our pot odds should be 90:30 or 3:1. But you say we must add our bet to it making it 120:30 or 4:1. Which is it?

P Paul Simkins
0 points · 7 years ago

I think this is about ratio odds vs percentage odds. I know this confuses me all the time. Remember, 25% = 3:1 (not 4:1).

The post is therefore correct. Note, in the second example, he does not actually say we must add our bet to it making it 4:1. He says we must add our bet to it making it 25%. And 25% is 3:1.

So, in the second example, our opponent has bet 30 to make the pot 90, so the odds are 90:30, or 3:1. Alternatively, we need to put 30 into a pot of 90, making our bet 25% of the final pot (120).

Note also that the odds in the first example are 5:1, which is 1/6, or approx. 17% odds

? Anonymous
0 points · 7 years ago

Yeah I got it now. A buddy explained it to me like this: ratio method is losing cards vs winning cards and the pot's money vs your money.

Percentage method is winning cards as part of the whole (deck) and your money as part of the whole (pot).

It's pretty much exactly what the article said, but when phrased like this it clicked for me.

Thanks!

? Anonymous
0 points · 13 years ago

cool....it's easy to understand

Anonymous

? 0 points · 13 years ago

I see that Ratio Method in the flush example 9/38 gives 23% in percents, but Percentage method gives 19%.

G Greg
0 points · 13 years ago

I think you've made a small mistake when turning that ratio in to a percentage.

- If we simplify 38 to 9, we get 4.2 to 1. This is a simplified ratio, not a fraction. (for every time something happens 4.2 times, the other thing will happen 1 time).
- As a fraction, this is 5.2 to 1. (something with happen 1 in 5.2 times)
- If we turn this fraction in to a percentage, we get just over 19%

I think you tried to turn the ratio (not the fraction) in to a percentage, which meant that the result was slightly off.

G Greg
0 points · 13 years ago

I should also mention that the percentage method gives a rough guide to the pot odds. It's not as accurate as the ratio method, but the trade-off is that it's faster.

? Anonymous
0 points · 13 years ago

But the card odds of 17% that you came up with is only for making the draw on one more card...even though there are two more cards to go using your example (the Turn and River cards). So really the card odds for making the draw overall would be 32%, as I understand it.

G Greg
0 points · 13 years ago

You are right, there are two more cards to come in each of these examples. However, you actually only work out the ratio/percentage for the amount of times you will make the best hand by the river (after seeing both the turn and river cards) if you can guarantee that you won't call a bet on the turn.

Basically, if you're using the odds of hitting by the river when on the flop, you're assuming that you're not going to have to call a bet on the turn. In most situations however, this is not going to be the case.

Therefore, unless your opponent has moved all in, you should work out your card odds for the next card only. If you take it 1 card at a time like this, you will avoid paying too much for your draws.

Thanks for asking this question and I hope that my answer helps to explain a few things. I'll update the article with a few notes to make it clearer (hopefully!).

G **Greg**
0 points · 13 years ago

I've updated the article. Here are two more links that you may find useful too:

[http://www.thepokerbank.com... \(http://www.thepokerbank.com/strategy/mathematics/pot-odds/4-2/\)](http://www.thepokerbank.com... (http://www.thepokerbank.com/strategy/mathematics/pot-odds/4-2/))

[http://www.thepokerbank.com... \(http://www.thepokerbank.com/strategy/mathematics/odds-mistakes/\)](http://www.thepokerbank.com... (http://www.thepokerbank.com/strategy/mathematics/odds-mistakes/))

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 13 years ago

Hey i understand the ratio method now but the thing is that what about the other peoples cards that are still in and the others that have folded but still were given two cards. Wouldnt things change because u would need to subtract all of there cards from the total of 52 as well. Or do you just count yours and the flop? Because u never know if the others that folded or are still in could have the card u need and can change the outcome. I hope u understand what im asking.

G **Greg**
0 points · 13 years ago

That's true. You never know what cards your opponents are holding, so a few of your "outs" could actually be in your opponents' hands.

However, these pot odds calculations do take in to account the fact that your outs may no longer be in the deck. The key thing to remember is that you're working with *unknown* cards vs *known* cards.

So, because we do not know what cards the other players are holding, we have to assume that there is an equal chance for any of the *unknown* cards to be dealt from the deck on to the board.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 13 years ago

Sry i also wanted to know why if he pot odd ratio is higher then card odds u should call but in the percent method u should fold if the pot odds are higher then the card odds?

G **Greg**
0 points · 13 years ago

When you convert from a ratio to a percentage, the higher the ratio becomes, the smaller the percentage becomes. For example:

3 to 1 = 25%

4 to 1 = 20%

9 to 1 = 10%

With pot odds, you always want the actual pot *odds* to be longer than the odds of improving to make the best hand. If you think in terms of percentages alone, you always want your card odds to be greater than your percentage pot odds.

So the slightly confusing part here is that as the ratio odds *numbers* get bigger, the odds are actually getting smaller/longer (e.g. the odds of 9 to 1 are much longer than odds of 3 to 1).

This is why with ratio pot odds, the bigger the X to 1 odds the better (because it means the risk is much smaller in relation to the size of the reward).

Hope that makes sense!

?

Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

very much so i was acutally practicng the ratio method last night with some scenarios and it made alot of sense after i tried it out and it seems that it really can help you out on the decision to call or fold

?

Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

I understand both ratio and percentage but what happens when you are not only working a flush or straight but there is also a chance for three or four of a kind.

Are they figured out separately or somehow worked together to give you an overall out look on your odds?

G

Greg

0 points · 13 years ago

Good question. If this is the case, you simply add those extra outs to the calculation.

For example, let's say we have Kh Th on a Ah 2h 7c Ts board.

If we believe hitting a flush is the only way we can improve to win the hand, we have 9 outs (13 hearts minus 2 in our hand and 2 on the board).

If improving to 3-of-a-kind will also help us, that's an extra 2 outs (4 Tens in the deck minus the 1 in our hand and the 1 on the board).

Therefore, in total we have 11 outs that will help us to improve to make the winning hand. Our "card odds" would then be 35:11 (don't forget that we are on the turn, so there are 46 unknown cards in total), or roughly 3.2:1.

All you have to do is just tally up all of your outs and go from there. I hope that makes sense!

G

Greg

0 points · 13 years ago

I just finished writing an article to help with working out the odds for less common (or somewhat unusual) draws in Texas Hold'em: <http://www.thepokerbank.com...>
(<http://www.thepokerbank.com/articles/strategy/working-out-odds/>).

Hope that helps!

?

Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

ok i understand all the points:-). i think this is a great page you have. im new to the game and just starting to play alot more/read alot more in to strat etc. i was struggling on pot ods...i always understood the concept but was never able to actually nail the formula, thanks to your page im all over it now...hopefully it will reduce my crazy win lose swings.....welll swings would actually make iit sound like im crazy up at times.....im not, i play like a micro stakes viktor blom...but my highs are only ever about 30 dollars, so much work to be done b4 vegas one feels. but 4real thanks again this site has helped me alot.:-)

?

Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

What about that first example how can you make profit here? 80 pot 20\$ bet, 5 to 1 odds. so winning odds also 1 out of 5 its just a ratio 4:1. So there is zero profit!

?

Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

i understand now that the odds is important to winning pots which in turn ends up being better in the long run. ok, im done now. lol
great site btw learned tons today cant wait to apply it :-)

G

Greg

0 points · 10 years ago

No probs :)

?

Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

This is confusing on the top the pot odds are greater than the card equity and that's a good thing and you should call on the bottom where you talk about it in percentage form The pot odds are greater than the card equity and it's a bad thing so I'm confused!



Anonymous

0 points · 9 years ago

that's the ratio thing. $4-1 = 25\%$ $5-1=20\%$ so the pot odds are still better than the card equity. it's just stated different.



Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

This is outright wrong - 0 odds = 1% chance of winning?

The stuff about calling only where the odds correlate is absurd. Disregard this anyone, learn 2/4 rule elsewhere



Greg

0 points · 11 years ago

Ha yeah, doesn't work very well in that situation. The $2x + 1$ is just a rough rule for using on the fly, not a 100% accurate one for formal calculations.

PokerStove is the best if you're looking for accurate equity calculations.



Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

The stuff shown here is about calculating pot odds, not calculating implied odds, floating or picking off bluffs. In short, I think it's meant to be an introduction to the basic math of poker, and not necessarily meant to be a discussion of optimum strategy in all circumstances. For people who don't really know anything about the math of the game, I think it's a fairly good introduction.



Greg

0 points · 11 years ago

Thank you akashenk. A basic introduction is what I was going for.



Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

the $2x + 1$ comes from $8/47 * 2/2 = 16/94$ which is roughly $16/100$. To account for the round up, you add 1% back, therefore 17%. It's just a quick arithmetic trick, just giving you the steps to get to the end number instead of doing the actual math.



Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

Why make that more complicated than it needs to be? $2/2=1$ so you are essentially multiplying $8/47$ by 1. If you take a calculator and type in $8/47$ you indeed get .1702127.....



Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

I know exactly what u mean, I was waiting for an explanation on the rule but instead we had that double the out and add 1..



Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

Hi Greg

I am struggling with this... Can you tell me do I calculate the odds right?

Lets say that I have : A, 3

Flop is: 4,5,J

Unseen cards :47, 43 will not do straight, 4 will, so cards odds are: 43 : 4 about 11:1

Pot is 180 and last bet was 20, so I have to call 20 to earn 200 which is 10:1

I would be right to make the call, right?



Greg

0 points · 12 years ago

Your pot odds (10:1) have to be bigger than your card odds or odds of completing your draw (11:1) to make a profitable call, so from a strictly pot odds point of view you should fold. Your card odds of 11:1 are just out. If they were the other way around you would be fine.

However, even if there is the smallest chance of winning more money from your opponent if you hit a 2 to complete your straight (implied odds), it would make it profitable to call. Your pot odds are virtually neutral, and the slightest amount of implied odds will make it +EV to make the call.

Also, when you say the pot is 180, does that include the 20 bet? If so that's cool. The only problem would be is if the pot is 180 including that 20 bet, but then you add your potential 20 call to make pot odds of 200:20. With the ratio method you do not add your potential call when working out pot odds.

Does that help?

Anonymous

? 0 points · 12 years ago

Hi Greg

Great article, hat down. More examples will be quite useful, not to mention a quiz with 20 cases, so the one can test his knowledge and correct his mistakes. Those features will make it far best article on poker odds on Internet.

G **Greg**
0 points · 12 years ago

That's a great idea, thanks!

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

This might sound dumb, but I'm new to all this. On the first example, if we used % instead of ratio, wouldn't it be 19% card odds, and 20% pot odds? I'm not understanding something am I?

G **Greg**
0 points · 12 years ago

Not dumb at all, it's a good question.

When working out percentage pot odds don't forget to ADD your own potential call to the pot before working out the percentage.

So our opponent bets \$20 in to a \$80 pot, making the pot \$100 in total. We then ADD our own potential call making it \$120. Therefore \$20 is 16.6% of \$120, so our pot odds are 16.6%.

The percentage pot odds are worked out a little differently to ratio pot odds, as with the ratio you don't need to worry about adding your own potential call. It's a little detail that you'll get used to. Even now I still overlook this point from time to time!

G **Greg**
0 points · 12 years ago

And yes the card odds would be 19%.

Card odds = 19%

Pot odds = 16.6% (or 17% rounding up)

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

Thanks, I got it now. I knew I was overlooking something. This is going to be pretty hard for me to get the hang of. I play mostly MTTs online and I've never really been involved with the actual math. Of course I know how to count my outs and what not, but to put this on a much bigger scale is going to be tricky for me. I do think most of the decisions I make are +EV according to what the math would suggest, I just want to start using math to add it to me arsenal.

G **Greg**
0 points · 12 years ago

Yeah that's a great idea. This mathsy stuff does look overwhelming at first, but the more you use it the easier it gets. After a while it will be second nature.

If you just get to grips with the straight and flush odds that's 90% of pot odds covered, as these are the most common draws you need to worry about.

K **Krishnabh Medhi**
0 points · 12 years ago

I'm new to poker and I have one small question after reading the above article (which is really nice by the way)

We are calculating the number of "outs" that make the hand that we're expecting to complete. But we are not taking into account what kind of hand we're expecting to complete.

Suppose we might be calculating the number of outs for completing a 3-of-a-kind, whereas my opponent may have a very good chance of (and might be calculating his own odds for) a straight or a flush, which will always supersede my hand even if I do get my 3-of-a-kind.

How are we taking that into account, if at all?

G **Greg**
0 points · 12 years ago

That's a very good question. What you're actually referring to here is "reverse implied odds" (RIO): <http://www.thepokerbank.com...> (<http://www.thepokerbank.com/strategy/mathematics/reverse-implied-odds/>).

There's no easy and accurate way to account for RIO when working out pot odds. However, what you can do is discount some of your outs to help account for these RIO.

For example, let's say we are drawing to a straight draw on the turn and there are 2 spades and 2 hearts on the board. There is a small chance that if another spade or heart comes on the river, even if this completes our straight we could still end up with the second best hand. So it would be a smart idea to discount 1 or 2 of our 8 outs, which leaves us with 6 or 7 outs to work with when working out our pot odds.

To give another example, let's say that we're on the turn again with a straight draw, except this time there are 4 hearts on the board (and we don't hold any hearts). In this instance we should discount almost all our outs, as it's highly unlikely that even if we hit our straight we will win. So if we said we discount 6 or 7

of our outs from the initial 8, leaving us with 1 or 2, we will almost never have correct odds to draw to our straight (which makes sense).

Again, I'm sorry to say that there's no quick and easy mathematical way to "discount" your outs to account for RIO. The more you play though the more you'll get to grips to it, and the more accurate your educated guesses will be.

Does that make sense?



Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

What if you are counting weak cards as outs? Lets say I had a J,6 in my hand but there was nothing really on the flop. I work out odds for the possible pair on each of these (6 outs x 2 = 12 + 1 = 13). Now if I get lucky and a 6 turns up next, how can I be so sure that I have the better hand. I was basing my bet on 13% which is a lucky turnout but it's not too hard for someone else to have a better hand. If I am left with a decision to fold or bet do I go with my instinct or stay with the math. Am I missing something?



Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

Greg's completely right, and it is a good question. The thing to remember is that these calculations give you the odds of completing your hand when you are on a draw. This is NOT the same as your odds of winning the hand. As you correctly point out, you can complete your hand and still lose.

The chance of you winning your hand is known as your 'equity' and this is a completely different calculation, although there is plenty of discussion on this topic on the web, as well as equity calculators which will calculate your equity in any given position.



Greg

0 points · 12 years ago

It sounds as though you already know the answer to your question on this one.

If a card is unlikely to give you a better hand, then it's not really an out, so it's not worth paying to draw to. So in that case, I wouldn't use pot odds to try and work out whether or not it's worth drawing to cards that probably won't give me the best hand.

There's no harm in "weighting" outs though to give you a better idea of your equity. For example, let's say our opponent moves all in on the flop. We have a low flush draw and we think we're probably good 50% of the time if the flush hits. In that case, instead of working out that we have roughly $4 \times 9 = 36\%$ chance of winning, we could just think of having 50% of 36%, which equals 18% chance of winning. It's a bit awkward and more complex, but it addresses the idea of working with "dodgy" outs in pot odds.

The shorter answer would be that I wouldn't care about going this far with these semi-outs in pot odds. I'd just stick to the basics when working with pot odds, and if you want to take it further then start plugging cards in to PokerStove to find your equity.

- Pot odds for simple stuff on the fly

- PokerStove for more accurate and more complex stuff off the table

Good question Gary!

?

Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

Ok I understand using the ratio method very well. I understand taking it one card at a time from flop to turn and turn to river. In the instance of using both the turn and river for your calculations from the flop its recommended to only do this if your opponent is all in. My question is would if he makes a rather large bet on the flop. Not all in. Like say his bet is about half of his chip stack.(pretty much a short stacked player) would we then use the two card calculation for that instance from the flop? The reason I ask is because on the turn he will pretty much be pot committed. You could almost assume that he will shove on the turn in most cases. If not and he checks to you. You could then commit him to the pot and put him under pressure to either fold a huge pot compared to his chip stack ratio size or call. So basically even though he isnt all in on the flop you can assume he will most likely be all in on the river. If this question doesnt make sense please ask me to rephrase it.

Brandon

G

Greg

0 points · 13 years ago

Hey Brandon,

I think I understand your question. You explained it well.

In the situations where your opponent is almost definitely getting the remainder of their stack in on the turn, you use the odds of improving across both the flop and turn and add the remainder of their stack on to their current bet size (when working out your current pot odds).

For example, let's say that we have a flush draw on the flop and the pot size is currently \$20. Our opponent has \$15 left and they decide to bet \$10, leaving them with \$5. Now because they only have \$5 left, we are 99% sure that this will be going in on the turn.

In this situation, we may as well pretend that our opponent has just bet \$15 on the flop, because we're almost guaranteed to call that extra \$5 on the turn anyway. So if we work out our odds:

Pot odds = $35:15 = 2.3:1$

Flush odds = 1.9:1 (across 2 cards - the turn and river)

As a result, our pot odds are larger than our odds of completing our flush, so we should call.

So in a nutshell, when your opponent is almost certainly getting the rest of their stack in on the turn, you should work out your pot odds as pot:stack rather than pot:bet and use the odds of completing for the next 2 cards.

Hope I explained that well enough for you.

Anonymous

? 0 points · 12 years ago

Hi I got a question. I been playing online for about 2 years now and I find that I have an over all - expectation of 2 bb .100 hands. 1. I find that pple online always bet 75% as a continuation bet . And pple who c bet alot will bet again on turn. So inthat sence that means we should never play flushes or straight draws. Cause it's always a loser in the long run?

2. How should we call a suited card from the flop? How many limpers or how many pple calling a raise to make it a valid card to call preflop to hope to draw to a flush draw?

Ps I want to become an online poker pro.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 10 years ago

If I'm not mistaken, suited cards only add about 3% to the strength of your hand (i.e., if you have 10 9 offsuit and you have calculated that you are 42% favorite [underdog] to win a hand -- don't take this too literally, it's just an example to show the math -- if you were in the same situation with 10 9 suited, you would be 45% favorite [underdog]).

G **Greg**
0 points · 11 years ago

1. I wouldn't play a hand just to try and hit a flush. Having suited cards is a bonus, and it gives us good equity if we do happen to hit a flush draw on the flop or turn.

For example, playing AJo might be okay, but AJs would be better because of the greater opportunity to hit a flush at some point. The real reason for playing the hand is because of the two high cards. The fact that they're suited is just a bonus.

So don't play a hand with the plan to only really be able to win by hitting a flush on the turn or river. I'd play 2 suited high cards fairly often (e.g. AQs) , but I'd rarely (if ever) play 2 low suited cards (e.g. 83s) because it gives me so much less opportunity to win. High cards are much better than cards that are low and suited.

2. How many limpers/callers preflop make it worth calling to draw to a flush?

It depends, but the more limpers/callers the more room you have to call. With 4+ players in the hand it starts to look better odds wise. However, I'd only do this almost exclusively with an AXs hand. Mostly beause if I hit the flush, I want to be sure I have the best hand and won't get stacked by someone that happens to hit a bigger flush.

Limping along with 2 low suited cards (e.g. 94s) is a bad idea. It will set you up for big losses. Just stick with AXs if you're limping along. It shouldn't be a big part of your strategy though – these situations will be rare.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 11 years ago

Great introduction to the topic! My mates and I play hold'em socially and I'm a middling player looking to improve. We all start with a set stack and players drop out of the game as they bust. When we have a round of betting, the pot is put to one side after the final call and really doesn't factor into the next betting round after the flop, turn or river. Each betting round is totally "fresh". Does this style of play change your calculations since you're never truly weighing up the total pot, but only the pot on that betting round? Thanks in advance.



Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

I take issue with this concept of comparing pot odds to card odds. You write:

"This means that we should call as the odds we are getting from the pot are bigger than the odds that we will hit our flush on the next card. In the long run we will be winning more money than we are losing".

Card Odds: 4:1

Pot Odds: 5:1

Therefore if the same situation came up 5 times you will end up making money .

isn't it based on the premise that in all 5 of the times this situation presented itself that the betting would be exactly the same? But in tournamen play with increasing blinds and therefore increased betting and pot size it rarely is the same.



Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

G'day George, another player here. I think you're taking it too literally. You won't get to make that same bet in that same scenario X times in a row.

This is basically a comparison of the percentage of the pot compared to the percentage chance you'll get your winning card/s. That can be done at any time on any hand when you are weighing up calling a bet. If you're facing 25%P bet with a 16% chance of sucking out your card, then mathematically, it's a bad bet. In the long run, that betting scenario would be a losing scenario.



Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

i may have missed somthing but i wonder why we double the outs? i.e flush draw with 1 over card.... $12 \times 2 + 1$. does this make sense? and can you go into detail about how playing pots that are favorable to your odds works out it the long run. thanks.

I



Anonymous

0 points · 9 years ago

8 outs divided by 47 unknown cards = 17%

$$8 \times 2 = 16 + 1 = 17$$

Just an easier way to figure it out

?

Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

Nice article! I personally prefer the percentage method. But theres one thing that seems very confusing. Example from 6-max cash game: I'm holding AcQc in UTG. I will make a bet of 10\$ which my opponent in BTN calls - making a total pot of 20\$. Now the flop seems very favourable to me: 3h 4c 9c - I will make another bet about 15\$ and now my opponent reraises my bet to 30\$. So the total pot is $20+15+30=65\$$ and if I make a call here, adding another 15\$, the total pot would be 80\$. What are the pot odds now? Is it $15/80=18.75\%$ (includes only that 15\$ I need to call) OR $30/80=37.5\%$ which includes also the earlier 15\$ that I bet. I hope I formed my question well enough for you to understand! Thanks!

G

Greg

0 points · 10 years ago

Good question. It's $15/80 = 18.75\%$

Why? Because money you've already put in doesn't count. You always work out pot odds moving forward, and based on the pot size and bet size you're facing right now.

Forget about any money you've already put in to the pot. As soon as you put money in to the pot it's gone. It should have no influence on your future decisions because it doesn't affect the odds your opponent is giving you when you face that raise or reraise.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

So E, you have two over cards and a flush draw. That's 6 outs for the overs (if you think hitting an A or Q will beat your opponent i.e., you believe they have a pair...) and 9 outs for a nut flush. That is 15 outs.

The rule of 4 starts to overestimate your chances of hitting a winning card when there are more than 9 outs, but $15 \times 4 = 60\%$ says there is a better than 50% of hitting a winning card by the river (assuming no more betting) so this is an automatic call as your bet is 18.75% of the pot.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

Hello,

I'm begginer and I've few questions on example about percentage method:

1. \$120 : 30 isn't 25% it is 20%? Am I not right?

2. I'm confused a little bit that difference sources provides different methods to find percentage of pot odds. I thought that my own bet shouldn't be added to the pot size. Provided example says that it should. My bet of \$30 should be added to the \$90 of existing pot. So what we have:
- a) if my own bet shouldn't be added to the pot size then $\$90 : \$30 = 25\%$
 - b) if my own bet should be added to the pot size then $\$120 : \$30 = 20\%$

Is that possible to explain why bet size should be added to the pot size?

Many thanks in advance

Respectfully

Maestro

M **Maestro Master**
0 points · 10 years ago

Hello,

I believe there is a small mistake in article "Pot Odds" which I described above.
Could somebody take a look and comment if I am right or not?

Thanks

Maestro

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 10 years ago

Someone makes a bet of \$30 which brings the pot up to \$120. Your minimum bet is a call of the \$30 which would bring the pot up to \$150. So your bet of \$30 is 20% of the pot **you** have helped create, the pot you stand to win. You are better \$30 for a chance to win the \$150 pot.

If there's at least a 20% chance of hitting the card you need then it would be "correct" to call.

M **Maestro Master**
0 points · 10 years ago

Hello Rob,

Thanks for your answer.

I agree with you.

Article says:

beginning of article

Our opponent has bet \$30 making the pot \$90. This means we have to call \$30 to stand a chance of winning \$120.

As you can see we have to add our own bet that we will call onto the size of the pot to find the total pot size.

This part is very important, as finding the percentage of \$30 in a \$90 pot will give a very different result than the percentage of \$30 in a \$120 pot. Using basic mathematics we know that \$30 is 25% of the \$120.

the end of article

Quick question:

\$120 : 30 isn't 25% it is 20%? Am I not right?

Thanks

Maestro

?

Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

The villain bets \$30 bringing the pot to \$90. Your minimum bet must be a call of \$30 which brings the pot to \$120. Your bet of \$30 is 25% of the pot you stand to win.

S

Stephen Hoelscher

0 points · 6 years ago

What would this look like as a ratio? 4:1?

?

Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

$20\% \times 5 = 100\%$ --- $30 \times 5 = 150$, so no! the pot is 120 not 150!

$120/30 = 4$ ---- $100\% / 4 = 25\%$. This is correct!

?

Anonymous

0 points · 9 years ago

"38:9, or roughly 4:1" and "Now we know that the odds of hitting a heart on the next card are 4:1 (our card odds). This means for every 4 times we don't catch a heart, 1 time we will."

As a percent, 9 is approx 25% of 38. Therefore wouldn't it actually be the case that every 3 times you don't catch a heart, you will on the 4th? I think you just worded it in a misleading way?

Anonymous



0 points · 9 years ago

just read your article on mistakes using odds. realised what I did wrong now ^^ !!



Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

well sounds good but you also have to calculate that if you make a straight or a flush you can get a lot of money from your opponent, so your calculation is not correct, and you never wrote about the stack sizes because they are very important if a call is like 50% of the pot but if you make your straight you can stack your opponent off you are getting a good prize for a hand that you actually calculated as a fold, if your opponent has the right stack



Greg

0 points · 10 years ago

You're right about potential winnings and stack sizes, those are definitely important when working out whether or not to chase after a draw.

I just wanted to try and cover basic pot odds in this particular article. Calculating implied odds is the next layer of complexity.



Anonymous

0 points · 9 years ago

How do you take into consideration the people acting behind you? Pot odds are 3 to 1 after the SB bets on the turn and I'm on a flush draw. Obviously I'm considering the implied odds since he's betting strong out of position, but I also have to consider the 3 people to act after me. I'm wondering if A) I'm actually going to have gotten better than 3 to 1 if others call and B) if there's going to be a raise behind me.

I know I didn't give the most specific example but I'm just curious about your thoughts on how you take the fact that you're way out of position into account.



nlcatter

0 points · 6 years ago

if I raise enough to only give 2.2:1 and they still call,



Anonymous

0 points · 6 years ago

Are you playing with maniacs? Or online game? Because there are people who don't give a crap about pot odds and just bet and raise and go all in without rhyme or reason. My suggestion, just keep those types of players to the right and let them decide your bet. Better to be passive with them, and call them on their BS when you have a monster.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

So say the pot is 100 and he bets 75 which is 3/4 are the pot odds 70%

?

Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

By the time the betting has come to you, the pot you face is \$175 (initial pot \$100 + opponents bet \$75). Your minimum bet is a call of \$75, which would bring the pot up to \$250 in total. When calculating pot odds via pot percentage directly **you must** calculate using the total pot your bet creates. Your bet creates a pot of \$250. So the pot odds from a direct percentage calculation method is your bet divided by the total pot you helped create or $\$75/\$250 = 0.3$ or 30%. The pot odds are 30%.

Now you calculate the card odds separately and if there's a 30% chance of making the winning hand, then it is right to call the bet.

H

Hubert

0 points · 4 years ago

In online games it's easy to see how much is in the pot but in a real life game is it worth summing up what is going in the pot? (You could be looking at your opponents for example)

J

Justin Mike

0 points · 6 years ago

Your reply will really help me a lot. Please read through the following:

Calculating Pot odds when there are multiple players in the pot:-

Example: 2 players and me r on the turn. Pot is \$400. A bets \$150 B calls and I call too. Pot is now \$850.

According to percentage method my pot odds are 17.64 %. So I need a 17.64 or higher winning chance (aka card odds)

Let's say the board is A 4 Q 6 rainbow and I hold 5 7 off suit. So my card odds are 17 %. Hence I shouldn't call as the card odds are less than pot odds (by just .64% - can I ignore this value as it's small or should I call if I have a good feeling of getting the card I want? AKA implied odds)

Also, in the same example above if the board was Ah 4d qc 6d and I hold 5d 7d (just to ensure clarity, h - heart , d- diamond , c - club) my card odds are 31 %. So I should call as card odds are way more than pot odds right?

In ratio method my card odds in this case would be - useful cards : useless cards = 15 : 31 or 1 : 2. This means that for every 2 useless cards I will get 1 useful card right?

R **Rob**
0 points · 6 years ago

In your first example, technically your pot odds (percentage of the pot you "paid for") is more than your card odds (% chance of hitting your winning card), so normally that would suggest folding since you're paying too much for the opportunity to try and hit your winning card... but it's as good as break even, so no-one would begrudge you calling there. Hell at the table you'd probably say "OESD, 8 outs, $2 \times 8 = 16\%$ of hitting on the next card, \$150 into \$850 is somewhere between 15% and well less than 20%, close enough, CALL!".

In the second example, yes, if you paid 17% for a 31% chance of hitting a winning card, then that's an easy call. TBH, most players would call even if they were paying too much... 6 outs for an OESD (two are flush outs) + 9 outs for flush, makes 15 outs, or in poker terms, a butt load of outs. Plus two of them outs make a straight flush - something slightly less rarer than unicorn droppings. Most players would pay any price with a buttload of outs and a possible straight flush...

M **Mauro**
0 points · 6 years ago

Rob, can you help me in a question? Using the same example. Suppose i my card odds are 31%, and the pot odds are 17%, its an easy call for me right? Will i ever want to increase the pot odds any value below my cards odds to make other players "lose money" or make them fold? Also, i play micro stake sng, so i'm supposing that most players are donkeys and don't understand how pot odds works, so thats why i'm asking this, because i can increase the pot odds, and they wont even consider this calculation because they don't know this. Whats your thought on this matter? Thanks.

R **Rob**
0 points · 6 years ago

Mauro, any time you're up against a player who can't let draws go or who will call down with any part of the board and you have a made hand, then make them pay the maximum you think they'll pay. Giving them the wrong pot odds is standard play to maximise their mistake and maximise your value. Sometimes their draws will come out. That's poker. In sitngo's it sucks when that happens because that could just have knocked you out or crippled your stack, so there are other considerations, tournament dynamics, tournament life, on the bubble, etc.

If you're up against a player who understands pot odds then sometimes you can bluff them with nothing, or semi bluff them with a good draw of your own by giving them the wrong pot odds to draw and they'll fold. But keep this in mind - if they've already made the bet and your raising them to give them the wrong pot odds, they'll be very reluctant to fold, so you better have the goods.

N **nlcatter**
0 points · 6 years ago

yes they are clueless and wont fold, but I dont run into them again to make Profit over time

M **Mauro**
0 points · 6 years ago

Thanks Rob. You've helped a lot. Last question: How can i have enough time to calculate it if we have so little time to take a decision in game?

R **Rob**
0 points · 6 years ago

I left this response a long while. This is the problem we all face, especially on line. Off table practice is the key. Get used to crunching approximate numbers and it will make it easier. Thinking of the pot in terms of how many big blinds it is helps tremendously.

P **Pokerguy1244**
0 points · 6 years ago

Hello, I have a question. IF calculating ratio vs percentage gives the same result, why do you have these two conflicting statements:

Ratio Method : Remember! You should only call if your pot odds are greater that you card odds (odds of completing your draw)

Percentage Method: Remember! You should only call if the percentage chance of making your hand is greater than the percentage of the pot you have to call.

A **Alstrice**
0 points · 5 years ago

Because "greater" doesn't mean the same thing in ratio and percentage methods.

Ratio example :

Pot odds of 5 : 1 is greater than card odds of 4 : 1. But it means cards odds are "better" than pot odds

Percentage example :

Pot odds of 25% is greater than card odds of 20%. But it means cards odds are "worse" than pot odds

B **Bradley Beech**
0 points · 10 years ago

I just want to thank you for giving this information for free and hosting a website so I can learn, thank you, you are a very good man!

S **SmokewoodBlues**
0 points · 6 years ago

If it were just about math, no one would win.

If you are on a flush or straight draw, all I would have to do is calculate my bet so that it prices you out and you would fold 100% of the time. That's stupid.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 6 years ago

No, that's exactly what you should do...how can it be stupid to win pots?

R **Rasmus**
0 points · 5 years ago

I generally think this is wrong. I'm pretty sure you want people to call with flush and stright draws. As we see in the article, there's only 17% chance to complete an 8 out-stright draw, and 19% to complete a 9 out-flush draw on the turn and river respectively. Meaning you will win the hand more times than you lose it - long term.

N **No**
0 points · 6 years ago

I mean its just pretty obvious that if you are protecting a high card on the board against a straight or flush draw, you bet at LEAST 150% of the pot. That's roughly what i've always done.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 6 years ago

What should I do in this situation:

I have JQ offsuit and flop comes K, 10, J. My opponent bets and I believe that he has top pair. I have 13 outs as I can hit a straight with A or 9, 2 pair with a Q, and a set with a J. I have a 28% chance of hitting one of these on the turn so I should be willing to call a bet of 62% of the pot or less. I have a 47.7% chance of hitting one of these cards on the turn or the river (I know rule of 4 says I have 52% chance but I believe 47.7% is more accurate). With a 47.7% chance of making my hand I should be willing to call a bet of up to 1037% of the pot.

What should I do? Should I just use the rule of 2 or should I consider that after seeing the turn AND the river my card equity is likely going to be better than the pot odds?

(Just an FYI, this did happen to me. My opponent had K7.)

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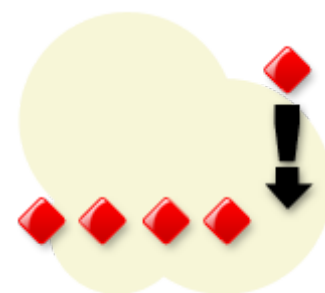
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Playing Drawing Hands Aggressively

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#)

In my previous article on [playing drawing hands \(/\)](#), I discussed how to work out whether or not to call a bet or raise depending on the type of drawing hand we had along with the size of the bet or raise in relation to the size of the pot.



The general idea throughout the article was to check and call to try and make our flush, straight or any other drawing hand as cheaply as possible. This alone is a profitable way to play poker if we use it correctly, however, there are alternate methods of playing drawing hands that could potentially be more profitable...

Try using aggression when you are on a drawing hand.

We can play drawing hands aggressively, by betting out or even raising instead of checking and calling. This may seem to contradict the strategy of trying to make our hands as cheaply as possible, but it does have some very big advantages, which can lead to us making more money from our drawing hands.

This [aggressive poker style \(/.../general/aggression/\)](#) approach is best suited to the advanced players, who are able to read their opponents and situations well, as putting money into a pot without a made hand can become very costly if you are unsure of what you are doing. However, if you feel that you would like to experiment with the aggressive approach, stick to the drawing hands that will give you the nuts on completion, such as an Ace-high flush or top straight draw.

Advantages of aggression on drawing hands.

As with many poker situations there are two ways to win a hand... you can win by having the best hand, or by making your opponent fold. The aggressive style of play lends itself well to poker as it leaves the doorway open to win pots when you do not have the best hand.

Betting with a draw works well as a [semi bluff \(../../plays/semi-bluff/\)](https://www.pokerstrategy.com/strategy/semi-bluff/), because we may well take the pot down straight away without even needing to complete our hand. However, if we get a call from our opponents then we still have the opportunity to catch the right cards to make our draw and win the pot.

To further this point, the advantage of betting out instead of checking and calling with a draw is that it disguises our hand. By making bets or raises, our opponent is more likely to believe that we already have a made hand, and will find it harder to put us on a draw than if we had checked and called a bet from them.

Opponents are less likely to place you on a drawing hand if you are playing aggressively, which can work to your advantage later on in the hand.

Because our opponents will be less concerned that we have a draw, when the next card comes such as the 3rd card of the same suit, our opponents will be less scared and continue to bet/call because they won't be giving us credit for the flush.

Another advantage of betting with a draw is that it builds the pot, and can force opponents into giving us the correct [pot odds \(../../mathematics/pot-odds/\)](https://www.pokerstrategy.com/mathematics/pot-odds/) to call raises if they try and take control of the hand. As the size of the pot increases, we are more likely to be given the correct odds to call if our opponent decides to bet and raise with a strong but vulnerable holding.

Example of using aggression on a flush draw.

Lets say we are in a hand with A♥ 5♥ against one opponent, who is holding K♣ J♦.

The flop comes K♥ Q♠ 8♥ giving us the nut flush draw and our opponent top pair with Jack kicker. Now we are first to act, and we decide to bet **\$20** into the **\$40** pot.

Our opponent with top pair decides to raise, but because they are a little inexperienced yet want to protect their hand they minimum raise it to \$40. There is now \$100 in the pot and we have to call a further \$20 to win \$100, giving us pot odds of 5:1. The odds of completing our flush by the next card are 4:1, so we are given the right odds to call to try and make our hand.

- 5:1 pot odds.
- 4:1 odds of completing our flush.

This is an ideal situation that has arisen from a simple aggressive bet [on the flop](#) ([../../hand-guide/flop/](#)). Even though the semi-bluff did not work, we are still priced in to continue with the hand. If we did not make the bet on the flop and checked, our opponent may have come out betting around \$20 or more into the pot himself, which would have given us the wrong pot odds (3:1) to try and make our hand, forcing us to fold.

Although this looks like a perfect situation, it does appear quite often in numerous circumstances where you can influence the amount your opponent will bet to keep the pot odds in your favour.

Even if in the above example we went on to check the [turn](#) ([../../hand-guide/turn/](#)), if we didn't make our flush, our opponent may well still be scared about the strength of our hand and bet a small amount into the pot, which would again give us the correct odds to call. Because the pot is much larger, our opponent will be making a much bigger mistake by giving us the correct odds, and thus we will be profiting more from the hand in the long run from their bad play.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy](#) ([/strategy/](#)).

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L

larskyhnau

0 points · 8 years ago

I think, this article is good in general, but the math in the example need to be rewritten. There is surely no advantage at all in putting 40\$ into the pot on the flop rather than 20\$ and still not have the initiative in the hand. On the contrary that really sucks. So against very aggressive players, who will raise even a weak top pair, maybe we should consider to not make the semi-bluff at all. Or at least make it only with the strongest draws.

I also don't agree, that we have to fold a strong draw against a relatively weak $\frac{1}{2}$ pot sized bet. First in this example we are not only drawing to 9 outs for the flush but also to 3 outs for a higher pair with our overcard. That changes the math at least some. Also there are surely some implied odds for the times, we catch the flush on the turn. So even if the pot odds are slightly incorrect, we should still call. As a default, I will bet almost all draws myself. But if someone else bets before me, I will call up to around a $\frac{3}{4}$ pot sized bet at least with a strong draw.

This can actually be proven mathematically. Lets say there is 4\$ in the pot on the flop. If we call a $\frac{3}{4}$ pot sized bet, we are investing 3\$. The pot is now 10\$. We make the flush on the turn about 20% of the time. So we win on average 2\$, if our opponent will never bet himself and always fold to any bet, we make. At that of course leave us with a net loss of 1\$, because we invested 3\$ to see the turn card.

But our opponent is NOT always going to check-fold. If he will call another $\frac{3}{4}$ pot sized bet either on the turn or river, or make the bet himself, then there is 25\$ in the pot, and we win 5\$ on average for a net win of 0,5\$, since we also invested 1,5\$ more in the pot ourself ($0,2 * 7,5$). So we only need him to call or make a single standard sized bet $\frac{2}{3}$ of the time for the flop call to be break even. And that's not even considering the added value from our overcard. Or that we might sometimes be able to get 2 streets of value from the stronger part of his range like flopped sets, two pair, big overpairs etc. Hands that will not always shut down, just because a flushdraw fills. Or he could have a weaker flush or maybe a straight himself, which is also going to be extremely profitable for us.

If we don't improve on the turn and face another large bet, that's a bit different though. In this situation our overcard is going to be good less of the time, and sometimes the remaining stack depth is too small to give good implied odds. The board may also have paired, or a 3. spade might have hit the board, while we are drawing to a straight. All of these things are chopping into our implied odds. So just as a general default I will almost never fold big draws on the flop. But I will often do it on the turn, if I face another large bet unimproved.

L

larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

xx

?

Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

Hi , nice website , concerning the example :

we bet the flop 20 into the 40 pot , opponent raise it to 40 , the pot is 120 , we have to call another 20 to win 100 , 5:1 pot odds .

in reality i invest 40 (the first bet 20 + opponent raise 20) into pot 120 wich is 3:1 odds

On the other hand if we checked the flop opponetn may bet the flop lets say 20 into the 40 pot we have to call 20 to win 60 , 3:1 odds

in both cases the odds is the same .

What if we check raise the flop for a free card , it this case how much the raise will be , 2 times , 3 times or

...etc would you give us a sample just to see wich option is better ?

Regards

Philippe

G

Greg

0 points · 13 years ago

Thanks, and that's a good question!

The minor aspect that you're missing is the fact that after we have placed our money in the pot, it no longer "belongs" to us or remains part of an "investment". After we have placed our bet in the middle it belongs to the pot. When we're facing that \$20 reraise we are calling to win that \$100 amount, regardless of the fact that we've already contributed to that amount in the same round.

This same idea applies to all pot odds calculations in Texas Hold'em. When we are in the blinds, we do not look at those chips as money we have already invested when working out pot odds. Similarly, if we're facing a bet on the turn, we don't factor in any money we might have bet/called on the flop. We just take the odds as they are there and then and forget about the history of where the money came from.

With regards to check/calling or check/raising instead, it all comes down to EV calculations based on the type of opponent you're up against. For example, if your opponent never folds, then there would be more value in check/calling.

I should have tried to give more of a background on the opponent in this example, but I guess I'm hoping that you will assume that we have a decent amount of fold equity that you might not have thought about at first (which in turn gives betting a greater EV than simply check/calling).

FWIW, I think check/raising is the worst option out of the 3. The risk is much higher in relation to the size of the reward. Your opponent can also prevent you from even seeing a turn card by 3betting or shoving. Lastly, I think this option severely limits your potential winnings from implied odds (because your opponent will fold mediocre hands and force you out with nut hands), which is where I think a lot of value comes from in hands like this.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

hi hansen, thanks for your response to my message. i agree with everything u said below , i think thats what i lack the most in poker , is folding those " pretty hands" and i need to learn to let them go if the board does not pan out. Ive been playing for roughly 2 years , but ive been reading on poker for a few months, and the articles on here really has helped. I see you have a great understanding of poker, may i ask which stakes u play? im guessing u dont play mirco thats for sure!

ooooo and btw with the ace king example i gave out previously, if the turn card was lets say a high card (scared card) then i believe it may be worth to fire a 2ed barrel and if worse comes to worse just let it go on the river.

but yeah genreally with ak/aq/kq u wud c bet the flop even if u dont hit.

it really does depend on ur OPP aswell , if u know ur up against a calling station u might aswell let ur ace king go on the turn firing a 2ed barrel wont really help because hes prob gunna beat ya with a bluddy low pair!

I have a question , lets say ur in a tourney , now the buy in for the tourney is \$215 , thats quite a bit. u have a stack lets say around 30k , on 600/800 blinds, your first to act (UTG) ur dealt J J....u raise 3.2k, evereyone folds , late postion (CO) re-raises 6.4k.

personally what would you do in this situation? ooo and btw his stack size is roughly the same as urs not much difference. hes not been playing many hands, tight aggressive playing style.

u see here u can either CALL/ RE RAISE/FOLD or go all in.

ive read on poker sites that u shud never COLD call a pre flop raise or evan call a re raise, but J J is a great hand , and it maybe worth calling to see a flop , and folding if u dont hit ur set. It has great EV right? and implied odds. you want as much chips in the middle with these sorta hands , but his re raise was strong, im putting him on queens, kings, maybe even aces.....then again he cud have ace kings or ace queens.

disregarding what hand he has , he is in position and also has shown alot of strength which shows he has a strong hand, but j j is a hand thats hard to fold in that situation and it temps me so much to call his re raise to see the flop since i have the stack to it.

L

larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

Hi Jamie. I agree, that in your example, if the turn card had been a K (or even better an A), then firing out a 2. barrel on the turn would have made much more sence. This is also the general advice given on this page in the article about dubble barreling. But if you had AK, a K would have given you top pair, so at that point a raise would no longer be a bluff but for value, and the considerations would change accordingly. Instead of considering, what hands he would fold, you would need to consider, if he would call with a lower pair or a worse kicker enough of the time to make the raise a good valueraise. Or if you should rather play for showdown value or try to induce a bet from him.

The other situation, you describe, being min 3-bet to 8BB by a tight player, when you have about 35BB left and JJ as your hole cards, just absolutely sucks. There is no other word for it. By min 3-betting he is giving you a ridiculously good price to call, and why would he want to do that, unless he is 100% sure, he has the best hand? It

doesn t make much if any sence to min 3-bet with hands like AK or TT, because with han mind to generate some folds and pick up 4½ BB uncontested. So why not make your 3-bet bigger and generate those folds?

But it does make at least some sence to min 3-bet with AA or KK, because with these super strong hands, you obviously want to put as much money in the pot preflop as possible. But you also don't want your opponent to fold a hand, that could have paid you off after the flop, when it hits something second best.

So unless you have a good reason not to, I would probably give him credit for the range, he represent by making a min 3-bet, which is AA and KK exactly and really not anything else. So you could call here, since you only need to pay 3,2k for a chance to win 33,2k, if you get his entire stack. But you would need to do it strictly with the intension to setmine and be very disciplined to fold those 7out of 8 times, you don` t flop a set, even if you hit a "good" flop without any overcards on it. And therefore in reality all pocket pairs from 22 to QQ play almost identical in this particular and rather unusual situation.

This is assuming, that you have never seen him min 3-bet before the flop, and that his normal play would be to make a "standard" size 3-bet or maybe not 3-bet at all. If you have seen him min 3-bet many times, and perhaps even get to showdown with some weird hands, then obviously that changes everything.

Because then his range is way wider than just AA or KK, and frankly he is just an idiot, who have no idea, what the heck he is doing at a poker table. And then obviously it would be criminally bad to fold something as strong as JJ, when you are getting 3:1 on a call.

You could consider 4-betting him all in then. But generally I don't think that is a great play with JJ, because to do it for value you will need him to call with at least 88+, so that you are not dominated by his entire range of pocket pairs. And if he is a tight player, even a tight idiot, will he really call a 4-bet shove with 88 or worse pocket pairs? Maybe, and if you have seen him do it before, then by all means go for the 4-bet shove. But if not then I would just call his min 3-bet with JJ and play poker with him after the flop, and feel very good and confident about it. Even out of position.

So no I surely don't agree, that you should "never" cold call, and if everybody played like that, there would be no post-flop game at all. So that is just a ridiculous statement. But if a highly unusual line, your opponent follows, can really only be KK or AA, then you need to give him credit for having one of these hands and play your hand accordingly.



Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

hi hansen, thanks for answering the question and i agree with what u have wrote regarding it. JJ is a hand that is worth a call here because if u do hit ur likely going to take a nice lump of his stack! like u said u only need to call 3.2k to win 33.2k.

and defintely consider folding if u dont hit ur set , even if u have an over pair its still a tricky situation because of his 3bet. and yes if i see a OPP 3 betting (light) with hands like 9 10 suited then im gunna re raise (4bet) or just go all in. Im huge favourites against any two undercards here. u just have to think what ur player likely holding and u can determine that by thinking backat the sorta hands they played with previously , the hands they raised, 3 betted with etc. this can help u have a better idea on how to play pre flop with ur hand.

i appreciate u putting time and answering my questions, which stakes do u play may i ask?



larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

Hi Jamie unfortunately my financial situation does not allow me to play high stakes poker. But the game is in principle the same no matter what the stakes, only opponents can be a bit different.

Like you say it is all about trying to put your opponent on a realistic range of hands and try to guess, how he would react with different parts of his range, if you raise or check.

Yesterday I played against a guy, who was a relatively competent player, but had apparently never heard about "balance". So his actions often told me exactly what kind of hand, he had.

We were 5 players at the table, and in one hand I was sitting in the BB with 99, when 2 players had limped in. So I raised to 6 BB and got min 3-bet to 12 BB by this guy, who was to my left and therefore in the SB. I called the min 3-bet, since I was getting such a good price, but it send big alarm bells through my head. Because why on earth would someone just complete from the SB and then min 3-bet from 6 to 12 BB, when the BB has put in a raise, and what kind of hand would he do it with?

The flop came 8, 5, 3 so in theory the 2. best flop, I could have hoped for with 99. However he was first to react, and he jammed all in with his remaining 36 BB thereby making an overbet to the pot, which was only 26BB.

Now if I was ever confused about his range, that was now certainly no longer the case. Because would he make an overbet shove on the flop with AK, when AK missed? Really no. And would he complete from the SB and then put in a min 3-bet with K8 or A5? Again really no. So at this point I was definitely able to reduce his range to pretty much AA and KK exactly. And even if I was wrong about this, his range did certainly not contain anything at all, that I was ahead of, since even TT would crush me just as bad as AA. So I folded and lost only the 6BB extra, that he had gotten me to call before the flop.

At the other end of the spectrum on 2 occasions he min-bet only 1BB after the flop in a multiway pot. This is also a very weird play, and when I see someone do it, my first thought is always, that they are on a flush- or straightdraw, because then from a mathematical point of view the play makes sense.

If you have the only flush-draw, you have about 40% equity in the pot regardless of, how many players remain in the pot. So you want everybody to be putting money in the pot, and therefore from a purely mathematical point of view a big bet is not in your interest, since it will usually thin out the field of players. But a small bet is, because people will tend to call this even with janky stuff like 3. pair, a gut shot straight draw or even just an overcard.

On both the occasions, when he did it, there were 2 cards of the same suit on the flop. So I played him, like he had a flush draw, regardless of my own hand, which was in one case top pair and in the other just a pure bluff, that I took a chance with, since the 3. player involved had already checked the flop.

In both cases I raised him on the flop to something like 75% of pot and followed it up with a 2. barrel on the turn, when the flushdraw bricked, which it did both times. And on both occasions he folded the turn. Which makes sense, if he was on a flush draw. Because on the turn pot odds and implied odds combined are usually not good enough to call a bet of 75% of pot.

In theory you "only" need to get paid 50% of pot on the river to justify calling a 75% bet on the turn, but 50% is also a tough assumption to make. Because when the flush fills, the board will be very "obvious" and scary to someone, who don't have the flush himself, and check-folding most hands will be routine for at least tight players. So this guy had definitely done his homework on the math front, and his play was very mathematically "correct".

But exactly because it was so mathematically correct, I was now very sure, that a min-bet on the flop was indicative of him having a flush draw, if such a draw was on board. So when it happened the 3. time, and I had an A-high flush draw myself, I was extremely happy.

I put in a raise to 75% of pot to represent top pair, a third very shortstacked player called, and he called as well. The turn bricked with a deuce of the "wrong" colour and he checked. I checked as well to represent a "weak" top pair, that was cautious, because I had gotten two callers. The shortstack went all in. His all in was only for about 25% of the pot, the player to my right called, and I called as well continuing my "story" about a weak top pair, that did not want to fold, but did also not want to create a bloated pot.

On the river the flush completed, and the original top pair was still "good". Both turn and river were undercards. He checked, and I then pretended to think really carefully about it, taking not maximum time but a fair amount of time. Then I put in a raise, which was a bit on the smaller side, about 55% of pot, trying to represent a weak top pair, that had decided, it probably was still good after all, so why not try and go for a thin value bet?

He check-raised me, and obviously at this point I just put him all in. He called and just as expected, he turned up with a worse flush (8 high), and I won his entire stack, which was now about 70BB.

For me this was a fantastic playing session, and I think it illustrates very well the importance of playing in a balanced way yourself while taking maximum advantage of those players, who don't. And who by not doing it allows you to put them on a very specific hand type like big overpair or flush draw.

Of course I was "lucky" to have the A high flush, when he had a lower flush. But the point is, that because I had been able to put him on the exact type of hand, he had, and he had not been able to do the same with me, I would have been able to get away from the situation without losing my entire stack, if I had had the 8 high flush, while he was not.

Coincidentally this was actually an example of the topic for this article, playing drawing hands with aggression, and thereby brings us at least a bit back on topic. And I think this hand underscores really well the huge advantages of playing drawing hands with aggression. Because not only do you get fold equity in addition to your actual equity. It also makes it much more difficult for opponents to put you on a specific hand type, when they call you, and therefore it greatly increase your applied odds.

I really love this play, and many of my biggest pots have been won by betting exactly A high flush draws on the flop. In this case I might have gotten his stack regardless, because flush vs. flush is just such a nice cooler situation, when you are at the good side of the cooler. But I have also won big pots against someone, who bet and called aggressively on the river with hands like two pair or sets, because they simply did not believe, I could possibly have played a flush draw that way.



Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

well played!

I've been having a problem lately at the tables, it's happened one or two many times I would like to know if I'm in the wrong here.

I was playing a satellite the other day, I limped in with ace j, the board comes J 10 4, now I bet 3/4 of the pot, he raises.....the board has a flush draw, and I pretty much know he has the flush draw, and I shove all in, he hits his flush on turn/river. This has happened a few times to me, you see here I'm favourite I've got top pair and ace kicker (with my jack). I know it ain't worth going all in with a pair, but when you're playing sit and goes @ \$1, I guess that's just fine for me to do? I play 40 seater sit and goes. if I was playing in a proper tourney, I would probably just call a raise on the flop to see a turn card. that's if I'm putting him on the flush. and if the turn card does not help him that's when I can bet out to protect my hand.

What do you think? How can I improve my play here, if I have top pair on the flop and a good kicker just like the ace jack scenario. and on that flop there is a flush draw. if your opponent raises your bet how would you play it? What's the best way?

If I've got top pair vs a flush draw, I'm favourite, there's no reason for me to fold unless it's a big tourney for a big buy in then yeah you may have to fold because you would rather want something solid on the flop i.e trips /straight etc.

You wouldn't want to risk your stack with top pair. I'm also guessing that stack sizes take part in this.



larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

You can't do anything about variance in poker, so you are not doing anything "wrong", just because you lose the majority of coin flip situations, you get yourself into, in a period. Just ask yourself, would you also feel, you had misplayed those hands, if you had won them? I guess probably not.

So my advice, which is also the advice given on this homepage, is to focus your attention on expected outcomes rather than actual outcomes. If you know, you were a 60% favourite to win an all in, when the cards were shown, then don't start to question your play, just because you happened to lose it.

But about 3-betting all in on the flop with top pair top kicker, I am not sure, that is the best line to follow in general. First I don't think it is correct to assume, your opponent only reraise you on the flop with flushdraws. I think there are also sets and two pair hands in at least most opponents flop reraising ranges, and maybe even janky top pairs in some cases. So you need to follow the line, that is most +EV against all these hand types and not just flushdraws.

And second if you are actually correct in assuming, you are up against a flushdraw with a 1 pair hand, then you want there to be betting taking place on the turn, which is impossible, if you go all in on the flop. Pushing all in on the flop is what you want to do, if you are on a strong flush draw yourself.

This is because of the difference in the way, the two hand types play at the turn. With the pair, you almost always get to actualize all your equity. Because if your opponent makes the flush on the turn, on average you have very little equity left in the hand, so you don't give up much, if you fold to a turn bet from him. And also this will only happen 20% of the time, so it does not count for much, even if you sometimes give up equity by folding.

On the other hand, if he does not make his flush on the turn, which will happen 80% of the time, he still has about 1/2 his original equity left in the pot, because there is still one more card to come. And you can force him to give up that equity by showing all in on the turn, because he will then be getting incorrect odds to call, if your shove is more than about 50% of the pot size. So unlike him you will often be able to make turn bets, which are extremely +EV for you, regardless if he call them or fold.

Also its not even necessarily true, that you are the "favourite" to win with your top pair top kicker, because not all flush draws are equal. Lets say the board is Jd, 9d, 4c and you hold AhJc. If he holds 7d, 6d of Ad, 5d, you have about 61-62% equity, so against these particular flush draws you are the favourite. However if he hold Qd, Td or Kd, Qd, you only have 38-39% equity, so against these particular flush draws you are just as big an underdog.

On average it is probably not realistic to assume, that you have much more than 50% equity with top pair against the flush draws, which your opponent will reraise you with on the flop. So 3-betting all-in is probably not even a +EV move at all. It is only neutral EV or something very close to. And therefore you really need to follow the alternative line of just calling and putting the shove in on the turn, unless the flush has completed, which is definitely +EV.

It does help a bit, if you have the A of trump though, since that will increase your equity by about 5% against his entire range of flush draws. But even then it is in all likelihood more +EV to just call and put the shove in on the turn, unless the flush has completed.

In order for the 3-bet all in on the flop to be the most +EV line to take against a flush draw, I think you need to have something as strong as a set or trips. Sets and trips are much more valuable against flush or straight draws than other made hands, because they have about 38% chance to have improved to a full house by the river.

Two pair is somewhere in between one pair and a set/trips, and can probably be played in both ways with something close to the same EV.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 11 years ago

thanks hansen, that sounds spot on! next time im ive got top pair on the flop with a good kicker, i'll make sure i think twice on how to play the hand. I was playing in a tourney today , i came 7th, and made \$100. The buyin was only \$3.50, i was getting dead cards for the 1st hour and then managed to double up and played really well. it went on for roughly 6hours, and in the end i shoved with crap (i was short stacked) , think the blinds were 30k and i had 100k, and i was on the big blind with 8 6 , and the OPP on the small blind called my all in with k8, he had twice my stack, but i think that was not only bad play by me, but he also played it bad too. If i had folded i may of got a better card. thats something to learn from for sure!

I also agree with what u said , about " expected outcomes" rather then actual outcomes. If u have a great hand pre flop and u know ur favourties and u lose the hand , then hey thats poker it happens. just like earlier i was in this turbo, some guy raises with 66, i was dealt KK, so i re raised him, and he shoves, he hits his 6 on the board. and im out. ttypical exmaple which happens so often, cant say i played my hand incorrectly here, i was 80% favourite with the kings.

Theres this tourney o n 888 poker, its called the Sunday mega deep the buy in is \$215, im basically trying my best to play that. but i dont have the bankroll to buy in for it. so what i do is play the sats, theres 3 steps and then ya through to thetourney.

I usually get knocked out on the 2ed step, fishes keep hitting there flush mainley against my top pair, this is why i metioned that scenario previously to you.

now that i have a better understanding thanks to your comments , i wont be going all in on the flop like i have done before. If im putting them on a flush, then i'll call to see a turn if the turn does not help them then i'll make sure i wont be giving them the correct odds to see the river card.

L **larskyhnau**
0 points · 11 years ago

About your example, where you lost with KK to 66, even if he had shown up with AA, and your hand had been TT, you would still have made the right play by calling his shove. Because if 66 is part of his shoving range, then TT is slightly ahead of his entire shoving range, and obviously you have no way of knowing, if he is shoving 66 or AA this particular time. And even if you had a hand, which was behind to his shoving range, the call might still be correct depending on the price, he was giving you. Because you expect on average to lose less by calling than by folding and giving up on the money, you put in the pot already.

About the other example with 86 vs. K8, I think you made the right play also. If the BB is 1/3 of your remaining stack, you are pot committed and should not fold. So even 86 is not a particularly good hand, at this point your least bad option was to put your tournament life on stake with it. And since folding would be a mistake for either of you, you might as well be the one putting in the shove thereby giving your opponent a chance to make the folding mistake. The only other option would be the stop-and-go play, where you put in the shove on the flop regardless of, how you hit it. But since he was first to react, you might not have gotten that chance at all, so taking the "shot" before the flop was definitely ok.



Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

thats right yeah , i agree with that. I was in a tourney the other day and i was in the BB with AQ, i was stacked at 70k, blinds were 1/2k , i raised 8k , then the SB, went all in with a stack of roughly 80k. I decided to call his all in with this hand. obviously i shud be folding with this hand, however for someone to go all in right here , it kinda shows weakness? because if they had a great hand they wud be 3 betting with hands like aces kings. And the hand he did shove with was KJ suited....he maaged to hit trips K and hit full house , kings over 8s. Im assuming my play was incorrect , because im literally calling an all in with ace high . so the best thing was to fold , however i just felt that he never had anything that was better my hand, hence why i called him. in the long run though i shud be folding right? or i'll be risking my stack.



larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

When you have to call 62k with 78 already on the table, you are not getting the best price in the world, and you need 44,3% equity to justify it. So obviously you should only make this call with AQ, if you think his shoving range contain more than only the strongest hands. Against a tight range of say JJ+, AK the call would be massively incorrect. However when he show up with KJ, you were obviously correct in assigning him a wider range, and then the call with AQ was also correct, since you were probably even a favourite against his entire range.

So I think it is better to call and accept, that you will be knocked out early, if you lose a coin flip, which you are a slight favourite to win. Because when you win the coin flip, the early chip lead will give you a great position to attack other players. And after all there is usually only money to the top 10% or top 20% finishers. So if there are 134 players, it really does not matter, if you are knocked out in 122. or 76. place. All that matters is to make it into the money as often as possible. And to achieve this, you will need to take some risks sooner or later anyway.

About the way he played, I really don't like it. He was in the SB, so apparently he limped in and then made a really big 3-bet, when you raised him. And doing that with a hand like KJ is to overrepresent his hand and turn it into a bluff. And why would you want to turn a hand, which is relatively strong for the situation, into a bluff? Why not just play poker with it in a single-raised pot?

So I will say, that he is definitely a bad player with some strong agro-fishy tendencies. And playing against that kind of player is definitely profitable in the long run, because they so often overvalue their hands and/or make bad bluffs.

You just have to accept, that they will increase your variance, and that they will also reduce the value of your post-flop skills. And therefore playing against them can be a bit frustrating, when they get lucky and suck out, as this guy did here.



Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

hi hansen, and yeah he seemed like a pretty bad player, like u said u have something why go all in? why not 3 bet? i definitely knew the sorta hand he was going all in with which was pretty much k j or q j 10 q ,hands like that. Ive been doing pretty good lately , ive been managing my bankroll which has helped me build up slowly on micro stakes. Im still playing those sats , so i can get the entry ticket to the MEGA deep which is a \$215 buy in. i was on the 2nd step today, and 73 people joined it, top 11 get ticket, unfortunately i came 12th and i won \$15. i had a stack of roughly 8k on 1/12k blinds , and i had ace king suited early pos, i went all in. and big stacked called me with pocket 4s. It really got to me, because if i had held on , someone else would of prob got knocked out.....since there were two low stakes at only 3-4k. i guess i just took the risk, but there was no need too? because im just trying to survive and get a ticket. but hey thats taught me a lesson to prob fold any hand even if its aces in that situation? what would u have done in that situation? now i have to go back to step 1 again and repeat the process of going to stage 2 again. :(btw out of the remaining 12 players i was ranked 8-9th position, then got knocked out with the ace king suited.



Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

hi greg, ive been reading your articles for a good few weeks and i think u have done a great job. I just have a question which does not relate to this article above. I play 1/2 cent stakes very low i know , but i find it difficult to play against these players because they just dont have a clue what on how to play poker. for instance , i'm dealt ace king early position my strategy will be to C-bet even if i miss the flop (on 1/2 cent table) I raise average 9 cent ,lets say i get only 1 caller in late position and he calls my raise with lets say q 8 off suit , flop - 5 q 2 , i bet 1/3 of the pot , he calls my bet, .turn card (4) i would bet out 3/4 off the pot again, he calls the betriver card (j) i bet he calls and he wins the pot with a pair of queens.

now if u were playing bigger stakes i doubt someone would call a raise with Q 8 offsuit in late position , fair enough if its a hand like 88. especially if its a multi way pot then u have more EV and implied odds are higher.

my question is how can i play this hand differently on 1/2 cent stakes, im guessing the best thing is to keep the pot small until u have something decent on the flop?

all i ever do is read on poker lol, and tbh my bankroll stands at zero i play on 888 ,recently been playing freerolls on fulltilt to get a bankroll going. i do get near to the bubble pretty much when i play on fulltilt which says something. and ive won made money of poker a good few times. deep down i try my best to play

correctly , playing in position setting up yourself for the most profitable play and also knowing when to fold. theres alot to it and i know ive got alot to learn im willing to go all the way thats why im here :)

hope to hear from you soon

Jamie.

L

larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

The way to win against players, who call too much both pre- and postflop, the so-called "passive fish", is to be patient and wait for good hands and then valuebet the heck out of them. And in general against both good and bad players, don't just throw out bluffs for the heck of it. Always have a reason to think, that your bluff is going to generate enough folds to be profitable, before you do it. And if you don't have such a reason, then just check and give up, if you face a big raise.

In your example I think C-betting that particular flop with AK against a single opponent is pretty "standard", and I would also do it almost always. The Q definitely hit your perceived range as the preflop raiser (AQ or KQ), and if your opponent does not have it himself, he probably does not have much else, he can "like" enough to want to continue with it. So I think the C-bet is good here against almost all opponents.

But why do you bet the turn and river, when your C-bet is called, and you are still left with only A high? The 4 on the turn doesn't change much, but if anything it hits your opponents perceived range harder than yours, since if he could call you with Q9, he could also call you with hands like A3 suited or 53 suited, which will have improved on that turn card. So why do you think, he will fold to a turn bet, when he called your bet on the flop, and if anything the turn card improved his range more than yours?

And same for the J on the river. Why are you betting here, and what hand are you trying to represent by doing it? Are you trying to represent an overpair to the board (AA or KK)? Well then he obviously either has two pair or better, or he just doesn't believe you. Because otherwise he would have folded on the turn. So he obviously won't fold to a river barrel either, because he is scared, you could have KK or AA.

Will he give you credit for having QJ then and fold a hand like KQ or AQ, which he has called down so far? Probably not either in my opinion. Because really, just how likely is it, that you have been raising him all this way with something as mediocre as QJ and then sucked out on him on the river by hitting two pair? Not very likely at all. So if I was him and had gotten this far, I would definitely also get sticky and call down the last barrel as well. And laugh all the way to the bank, if I got to see your A high.

You are not going to win every pot in poker, and AK will lose to Q9 about 35% of the time, if the hands are played to showdown. So you need to focus on winning the mini-max game instead of putting up a big "fight" for every single pot. And learning to let go of "pretty" hands like AK, that were great before the flop, but are no longer great the way the board has panned out, is a big part of winning the mini-max game in poker.

I constantly hear losing players "explain" their latest loss with the words "I lost XX \$ with AA, I am so unlucky". And yes it sucks to lose with AA, because it is at least a 4:1 favourite against any other hand in poker. But come on. If the board is Q, K, J, 9, and your opponent is pushing all in, do you really still think your AA is the best hand here? Or are you just in pure denial about the fact, that you have been outdrawn, and that you therefore need to find the fold button and move on to the next hand?

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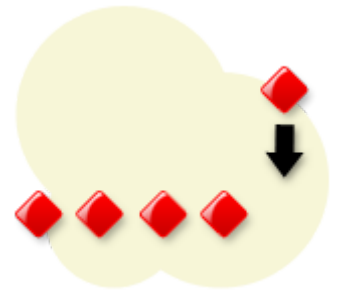


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How To Play Drawing Hands

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#)

It is a very common situation to be in when playing in the game of Texas Holdem... having a potentially strong hand that needs another certain card to complete it. This is known as a 'drawing' hand, as you are drawing to a specific card or a specific type of card.



These types of hands can be very difficult to play, especially if you are facing bets and raises and need to decide whether or not to call. However, by the end of this article you should be fully aware of **how to play drawing hands**, and know when to fold and when to call when facing a bet.

Flush draws and straight draws.

The most common drawing hands are **flush draws and straight draws**. When playing a drawing hand we have to evaluate how likely it is that we will complete our hand by the next card. We can do this by looking at the number of 'outs' that we have.

What are outs?

An 'out' is a card that will complete our hand. For example we have a diamond flush draw, an 'out' would be any diamond card. The more outs that we have, the better the chances are that we will complete our hand on the turn of the next card.

An out is simply a card left in the deck that will complete the hand that you are drawing to.

With a typical diamond flush draw (or any flush draw) we will have a total of 9 outs, as there will be 2 diamonds in our hand along with another 2 diamonds on the flop. There are a total of 13 diamonds in the deck, which means that 9 will be left in the deck that we will be trying to hit.

Similarly, we can work out the number of outs and likelihood of completing our hand for straight draws. There are however two different degrees of straight draw, the inside straight draw and the open-ended straight draw. An open ended straight draw is when we can hit either card on the ends of the straight to complete our hand.

Example of different straight draws.

If we are holding 7♥ 8♣ on a board of As 5♥ 6♦, we can either hit a 4 or a 9 to make our draw. Similarly, in an inside straight draw we are looking to hit one card in the middle of the straight to complete our hand. For example, if we again hold 7♥ 8♣ but with a board of A♠ 5♥ 4♦, we have to catch a 6 to complete our straight.

An open-ended straight draw has 2 outs, whereas an inside straight draw has 1 out. This makes inside straight draws harder to complete.

Therefore, with an open ended straight draw we have 8 outs (fours 4s and four 9s), and with an inside straight draw we have 4 outs (four 6s), meaning that we are more likely to complete an open-ended straight draw on the turn of the next card rather than an inside straight draw.

How to work with the number of 'outs'.

As we already know, the more outs we have the better, because it improves our chances of making our hand with the more outs we have. The real value of these figures lies in when working out the specific odds of winning the hand. We can then use these odds to determine whether or not it is worth calling a certain size bet to try and complete our hand.

There will be a few numbers involved in the next part of this article, but bear with me, its not as difficult as it might appear on first impression!

Working out whether to call or fold.

We can use the number of outs to work out the odds of winning the hand by comparing it to the number of cards we don't want that are left in the deck. If we have a flush draw on the flop, we have 9 outs to try and make our flush by the turn. There will be 47 cards left in the deck in total, of which 9 of these will make our hand, whilst the other 38 will not.

- 52 minus our holecards and the flop cards (5 in total) = **47**.
 - **9** cards of the same suit that we are chasing after.
 - **38** are of a suit that will not complete our flush.

Now if we put these figures into a ratio of cards we want against cards we do, we get 38:9. If we simplify this ratio using basic mathematics, we get a new easier to use ratio of roughly 4:1. Now this figure means that for every 4 times we do not make our hand on the turn, 1 time we will, and that is all that we need to know for the time being.

Now we know that we know that the odds of making our hand (and thus winning the pot) are 4:1, we can use these odds to determine whether or not to call a bet or raise. When facing a bet, we have to compare the size of the bet to the size of the pot; this will give us our pot odds ([../mathematics/pot-odds/](#)).

Using the odds when facing a bet.

Lets say for example our opponent bets \$20 making the pot \$100. We now must call \$20 to try and win \$100, but should we?

If we look at the ratio between the bet and the pot, we get 100:20, or put more simply 5:1. We are getting better odds from the pot (4:1) than we are from the cards, as we will be winning more for the number of times we make our hand. Therefore we should make the call. So as a general rule, if the pot odds are better (or bigger) than the odds we are getting to make our hand, we should call, as this will be the profitable play in the long run.

If the pot odds are bigger than the odds of completing your hand (based on the outs), you should call.

These odds and probabilities are constantly changing depending on the type of draw we have and the amount our opponent bets into the pot. Although it may look a little tedious and difficult at first, it is not too hard to grasp, especially if you use the system frequently. It may seem like more

effort than it is worth to learn about the odds, but it is a great feeling when you always know whether or not to call or fold for draws, as you will never be unsure of what to do.

This article discussed the methods of playing draws passively, to try and see the next card as cheaply as possible. Read my article on [playing drawing hands aggressively \(aggression/\)](#) for alternative profitable methods of playing drawing hands.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](#).

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? **Anonymous**
0 points · 11 years ago

Great site, just a burning question I have when I read anything about pot odds on your site. Why is it you're looking for ~1:4 pot odds to be able to call for a four to a flush but according to wizard of odds, i'm looking for at least 1:2 instead?

G **Greg**
0 points · 11 years ago

2:1 works, but 4:1 is more practical in real world situations.

- 2:1 is the odds of completing your flush by the river (if you're currently on the flop). So that's the odds over 2 cards.
- 4:1 is the odds of completing your flush by the next card (e.g. On flop waiting for turn, or on turn waiting for river). So that's the odds over 1 card. Hence the difference.

If you use 2:1 to determine whether it's "worth it" to call when facing a bet the flop, you have to get to the river without paying any more money. You're assuming that the bet you're facing is all you will have to pay to see 2 cards. As you can guess, this is rarely the case. There's a strong probability your opponent will bet

again on the turn, ruining your "profitable" call on the flop. You'll lose money if you keep using 2:1 to justify calls.

However, by using 4:1 you are just working out if it's profitable to pay to see the next card. Nothing can go wrong. Yes, the odds are much steeper, but it's mathematically correct 100% of the time. Plus, with a bit of intuition you can afford to bend this rule if you think you'll claw back money later in the hand through implied odds. You don't have to give up just because you're not getting 4:1 - but you'll master this with practice.

So whilst WizardOfOdds is correct (as always), the 2:1 odds aren't as practical for working out whether or not to call bets when you hold a drawing hand. Use 2:1 for the rare instances where your opponent is all in on the flop (so definitely no more bets on the turn. But for everything else, 4:1.

Does that make sense? I think you managed to find the only article on this topic that I didn't get around to explaining this on haha.

L

larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

I think many beginners get crushed by mindlessly calling every single flushdraw in particular, so for people new to the game using the conservative 4:1 odds is probably a good idea, that will keep them out of trouble.

However in reality this will a lot of the time mean not playing your flush draws or straight draws at all, since a lot of the time someone will put in a flop raise of more than 50%. And folding even big draws most of the time is hardly an optimal strategi either.

I therefore think, that people reading this should jump right on to the article "drawing hands with aggression", since betting rather than calling flops with big draws is not really that complicated, and in my experience it is a great way to improve the profitability of these types of hands.

Another important aspect not covered in this introductory article is the importance of added equity from overcards or made pairs. If flop is 10, 9, 6 and you hold K, Q, you have 4 outs to make a straight with a J. But in addition to that you also have 6 outs to make top pair with a K or Q, which will at least some times be enough to win the hand. So you definitely need to value and play this hand differently, than you would 8 7 on an A, 5, 4 board, where you can more or less only win on a 6, if your opponent has AK, AQ etc.

And similarly if you hold 10d 9d, and flop comes Ad, 10s, 2d, this is a much better flop than say Ad, Ks, 2d, since you have not only 9 outs to make a flush but also 5 outs to make 2 pairs or trips, which will also be enough to win the hand a very large percentage of the time.

On the other hand, if flop is Qs, 9s, 5d, and you hold Jc, 10c, you need to consider the possibility, that you dont necessarily have 8 outs to make the best hand, since Ks and 8s might give another player a flush rendering your straight useless even when you do make it. In particular this is something, that you need to consider when deciding, if you want to call a raise in a multiway limped pot, and there are already one or more callers before you.

So playing drawing hands is a bit more complicated than just knowing, that there are 9 outs to make a flush and 8 outs to make an open ended straight. You need to look at the entire situation, and this is definitely an area, where many beginners can make big and easy improvements to their game.

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Pocket Queens Strategy

By Mark Holland

A pair of queens are almost certainly the best hand before the flop in No-Limit Texas Holdem (/). However, there are two problems in playing this hand pre-flop. If you get into a 'raising war' it is very likely you'll be up against the only hands you truly fear – aces (/aces/) or kings (/kings/). Then after the flop, a high level of caution is required as an over-card to your pair could be dangerous, and so you should be careful that you do not become 'married' to the hand and are able to fold if you feel that you are beat.

This article will look at playing queens both before and after the flop in different situations. Some of the factors that will influence your play are the tendencies and betting styles of your opponents, the stack sizes in relation to the blinds and your position at the table.

How pocket Queens compare to other hands.

Statistically, the chances that your pair of queens are up against either kings or aces is very low. However, if the betting gets very heavy before the flop then you will need to assess the situation carefully based on the tendencies and possible ranges of your opponent. **It is not easy to fold pocket Queens pre-flop, but it is perfectly possible if you feel that the way your opponent(s) betting is distinctive of pocket Kings or Aces.**

For example, you raise pre-flop and get re-raised. Here your read on your opponent should guide whether you call to see the flop or put in another re-raise before the flop. If your opponent is super-tight and will only ever re-raise with aces, kings or ace-king (/ace-king/), then you can work out the probability of each using card distribution.

Here there are 16 possible ways of being dealt ace-king before the flop and 6 ways each of being dealt either pair. The probability of this opponent holding aces or kings is this approximately 43% with Ace-King at 57%. Of course you are either a small favorite or a big underdog in this situation – whether to see the flop will depend on the likelihood of your opponent folding those times when he has Ace-King and neither of these cards appear.

Against a looser opponent there is a greater likelihood that your hand is the best before the flop, even when re-raised. In fact against a habitual re-raiser you may be in a position where you have a dominating hand – for example against Ace-Queen or a pair of Jacks.

Using position.

In this case your [position at the table](#) ([../../basic/position/](#)) and [effective stacks](#) ([../../concepts/stack-sizes/effective/](#)) will have a bigger influence on your strategy than card distribution. If the loose raiser is to your immediate right then a re-raise is usually appropriate. This will prevent additional callers and ensure that you are playing the pot heads-up in position. Calling a raise and then seeing 2 or 3 more people enter the pot can easily ruin the strength of your hand – if an ace falls on the flop it is very likely to have hit someone who called the raise and you may have to fold.

If you re-raise in position an ace or king falling on the flop may not be a disaster for your hand. You will have an opportunity to see your opponent act before you do on the flop and a reasonable size [continuation bet](#) ([../../plays/continuation-bet/](#)) may well take the pot on the flop. In these circumstances a small bet from your (out of position) opponent can often indicate weakness, a probe to gather information about your hand. Here you should generally re-raise, planning to fold to an all-in [check-raise](#) ([../../plays/check-raise/](#)) or re-raise against all but the worst opponents.

Consider stack sizes.

Stack sizes will influence how you play any hand in no-limit Holdem, a pair of queens is a hand that is particularly sensitive to this. Facing re-raises with a deep stack has already been covered – however you need to adjust for shallow stacked play often found in tournament situations.

Once the blinds and antes reach 10% of your stack then raising and re-raising with queens becomes the optimal play. The reason is the comparatively larger ranges of your opponents in the shorter stacked situation. Now a 3 bet all in from a player in position is more likely to be an underpair to your queens (statistically speaking) than the dreaded aces or kings. In this situation an all-in will give you the added benefit of the blinds and antes to boost your stack.

A tricky spot.

A difficult situation often arises when you are dealt a pair of queens in early position at a full table. Here a raise is the default play, yet a loose table could see 2, 3 or even more callers before the flop. In this case your judgment of the meaning of the bets of your opponents becomes the critical factor – particularly as you will not close the betting action after the flop.

A raise and even a re-raise in this situation is the better play than checking and calling an opponent's bet when your queens are an over-pair to the board. The presence of draws on the board will also allow you to narrow your opponent's holdings. On a 'dry flop' such as 2-7-J any opponent who is willing to get all in needs to be assessed carefully – would this particular player only 3-bet with a set or are they the kind of player who thinks that their [ace-jack \(/videos/splitsuit/inverse-3/\)](/videos/splitsuit/inverse-3/) holding is good here?

Pocket queens strategy evaluation.

In summary, the key to playing with a pair of queens is to use the combination of your hand strength before the flop, good position at the table and judgment of the meaning of your opponent's bets and raises. The comparative looseness or tight [playing styles \(/general/playing-styles/\)](/general/playing-styles/) from opponents who re-raise will give you a lot of information on how to proceed with this strong yet tricky hand after the flop.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

Queens are good :)



Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

I love my girls :)



Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

i lost 2 times in a row (fairly big...2K+) with QQ



Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

I have a pair of queens playing no limit Texas holdem. The community cards are an 8 of clubs, 3 of clubs, 10 of diamonds, 2 of clubs, and a 6 of spades. The other person had a 6 of diamonds and a 3 of hearts. Who wins?



Greg

0 points · 11 years ago

The other person. He has 2 pair (6s and 3s - 10-6-6-3-3), you have 1 pair (Queens - Q-Q-10-8-6).

I hope you didn't lose too much :(



Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

I played a QQ hand yesterday, I'm wondering if I played it optimally.

First hand of the game, everyone as 1000 stack, blinds are 25/50. I'm small blind with QQ.

Early position calls 50, dealer -1 raises 125, dealer calls 125. I know all players involved and they are all relatively loose players.

I raised my QQ all in 1000, got folds all around for a 350 profit.

An alternative I considered was to raise only 300 and probably get called by the 2 players already at 125, and then go all in if flop isn't scary (either by check-raising or betting first).



larskyhnau

0 points · 8 years ago

By “scary flop” I presume, that you mean a flop with an A or K in it. That will happen about 40% of the time. If we assume, that the two other players will always fold to both a preflop shove and a flop shove, and that you will just give up and fold, in an A or K hit the flop, the math runs like this:

If you make the play, which you did, you win 350 chips. If you make the other play, there is 1.100 chips in the pot, which you win 60% of the time. That gives you an average win of $1.100 \times 0,6 - 300 = 360$ chips. So its just the same.

However that does not take into account the fact, that seeing cards is always an advantage for the player, who has the worst hand. So basically you are allowing your opponent not only to catch up, which can be a good thing. But also to outdraw you, which is obviously a very bad thing.

Also postflop your opponents will have the advantage of having position on you. They will both know, that you have jammed or not jammed, when its their turn to react. And therefore they have more information available, when its their turn to make the big decision, than you had yourself. So especially when you are out of position, I think, the line, you took, is the correct one.

Also your thought process, that it is important to get callers, when you have a big starting hand, is somewhat flawed in my opinion. And especially you don't want to raise so small, that you get multiple callers.

In this case my standard raise would be to something like 10 BB. Which would likely either get through or get only one caller, both of which are excellent outcomes. But since you started with only 20 BB, putting in 10 BB already makes you pot committed. And if your opponents are just even slightly competent, they will know this. So you might as well just jam it, like you did, and be done with it.



Anonymous

0 points · 3 years ago

how it's possible if you have pocket queen and other player is also have pocket queen ?

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How To Play Rag Aces

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

The definition of holding a 'rag ace' or an 'ace-rag' is being dealt an ace with another card lower than a ten. So the following hands can be regarded as 'rag aces': **A9 A8 A7 A6 A5 A4 A3 A2**.



It could be argued the range, in which the term rag ace incorporates, is smaller or greater than the one shown. For example some would say that a rag ace ranges from A2 to A6, but in my opinion the best way to determine an ace rag is in the range A2 to A9.

In a nutshell, a rag ace is an ace with a low kicker.

How to play aces with low kickers.

So that's enough of the background information, now how should they be played? It is typical for a beginner player to overestimate the strength of their hand just because they hold an ace, and this can lead them into trouble. This answer to the question on how to play aces with low kickers is as follows...

More often than not you should be folding rag aces. This may come as no surprise to any intermediate and experienced players as they have read this article or other articles like this, and learnt from mistakes they have made at the table.

You should always look to fold rag aces, as they will rarely win big pots and are likely to lose you a fair amount of money if you are out-kicked.

If you play rag aces, you are primarily looking for one thing to happen: making top pair with your kicker on the flop ([../hand-guide/flop/](#)). This is because this gives you the best opportunity of having the best hand and to make money. If you pair your ace and get action from another player

it is likely that they have your ace out-kicked, especially if they raised [before the flop](http://pokerstrategy.com/hand-guide/preflop/) ([../../hand-guide/preflop/](http://pokerstrategy.com/hand-guide/preflop/)).

There may be a slight chance that your opponent is playing a rag ace worse than yours, but you can never be sure of this and it is never ideal to be putting money into a pot when you do not know where you stand.

Tips for playing rag aces.

1] If you pair your ace and bet out, your opponent will only be calling/raising with the better ace leaving you unsure of where you stand, or they will fold an obvious worse hand – winning a small pot. Furthermore if you were to hold A5 on a board of AJ8, any action you would get would either result in you losing the pot or calling to win half. In the best-case scenario of your opponent holding an ace-rag, it is likely to be a [split pot](http://pokerstrategy.com/articles/strategy/split-pot-math/) ([../../articles/strategy/split-pot-math/](http://pokerstrategy.com/articles/strategy/split-pot-math/)) by the river.

2] If you make top pair with your kicker you have a better chance of making more money from another player that has hit top pair with a worse kicker. However this situation is unlikely and again **with one pair you can only hope to be winning a small pot.**

3] You make two pair on the flop against someone with an ace but with a better kicker. This will usually be a profitable situation for you. However it is not common and it would be a losing play attempting to make two-pair with a rag ace against an opponent with a better kicker. It simply won't happen enough to make the call profitable.

Rag aces do not win big pots.

As highlighted in bold, the key idea to remember with rag aces is that they are not designed to win big pots, and if you happen to make that two pair, it is actually going to be a losing play in the long run. Just think about it. If a player raises you with his AQ and you call with you A6 to see a flop, who do you think will be coming out on top the majority of the time? Hopefully this has drilled into you that you should get away from rag aces as often as you can – save yourself some money at the table.

When can you play rag aces?

In spite of what has been mentioned above, there are certain situations that warrant playing ace-rag in the hole (remember that no answers in poker are that straight forward). When playing short-handed poker you can loosen up your [starting hand requirements](http://pokerstrategy.com/basic/starting-hand-requirements/) ([../../basic/starting-hand-](http://pokerstrategy.com/basic/starting-hand-requirements/)

[selection/](#)). When there are 5 people or less at the table it is acceptable to play any ace with good [table position \(../basic/position/\)](#).

Rag aces can be played more profitably at short-handed tables, but you still have to be careful. Rag aces are generally best avoided if you are still developing a solid, winning strategy.

The likelihood that your opponents will be holding any aces has diminished significantly enough to change rag aces from losers to winners. The rule that you may only win small pots still applies, but the size of these pots will be slightly increased short-handed, as players will have a tendency to call bets with middle pairs.

Furthermore, an ace also acts as a plan B for clearing up uncontested pots with the high card. But be sure to let paired aces go if you come up against too much action after the flop.

Blind play with rag aces.

In addition rag aces are better suited for blind play (play within the blinds and button) for the reasons mentioned above, as once again there will only be a small number of players left in the hand. It is likely that you have the best hand so the optimum play is to raise with any ace if it is folded around to you on the cut-off or on the button.

If your opponent does call then you can evaluate how to play the flop with greater accuracy as you have position on your opponent. When in the [small blind \(../general/small-blind/\)](#) you should once again raise and hope to take the big blind. If your opponent does call then a [continuation bet \(../plays/continuation-bet/\)](#) on the flop is likely to take the pot down. When on the big blind with an ace rag you should raise if you feel you can take the pot otherwise it is best to check, as you will be out of position for the hand.

When you do play rag aces, you should keep in mind two key words: **[Isolate \(../videos/splitsuit/isolating/\)](#)** and **Determine**.

You should realize that rag aces are not the kind of hand that you want to be playing in a multi-way pot. Therefore you will want to isolate any possible opponents by raising to keep the action heads-up if possible. If you do get the call off one opponent, you will then need to determine the strength of your opponent's hand and if they does indeed hold the better ace than you.

There are no tips or rules to know whether or not he does; you simply have to have a good understanding of your opponent and the way they play.

Rag aces evaluation.

If you are unsure of how to play rag aces, then you should fold them. If you are relatively new to poker then rag aces are either going to win you small pots or lose you big ones. This type of hand is simply not designed to win big pots and that does not help with the main aim of poker - making money.

This risk you are taking to win a small pot is outweighed by the risk you are taking of losing a big one. There are some situations in which you can profitably play ace-rags, but the profitability margin is not great enough to concern yourself with these sorts of plays, especially if you are unsure of what you are doing.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy](/strategy/) (/strategy/).

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B **Buci Buci**
0 points · 3 years ago

Hello i have K5 my partner have A7 in the board are open the cards 4466K who win the game?

G **Greg Walker** MODERATOR
0 points · 3 years ago

You win.

- Your Hand: KK665 (Two Pair: Kings and Sixes)
- Their Hand: A6644 (Two Pair: Sixes and Fours)

You both have two pair, but you have a *higher* two pair.

A **Ade**
0 points · 7 years ago

I tend to use rag aces when I'm down in a tourney, perhaps on my way out and want to stay in a while longer because I'm near to getting in the money, against 1 opponent who hasn't shown much strength, they are a slight favourite and you can win threeways, you hit your ace and win with Top pair OR you go all in and cause your opponent(s) to fold, the other way you can win is with the highest card at showdown, they might be calling with QKs etc, so you have three ways to win going all in with a single opponent. It's Best played against a single opponent as it's easier to get one opponent to fold than two, as for getting more than three opponents to fold, it's a rarity. The more opponents, the more chance one of them will pick something up, even a lowly pair of twos beats your high card ace. So I use rag aces as a bit of a gamble to keep me in play.

L **larskyhnau**
0 points · 11 years ago

Excellent article. I agree that rag aces should usually be folded, unless the play is down to the cut-off, button and blinds. I also completely agree, that rag aces are not designed to win big pots very often, because any pair, you hit, will either be a very low pair or have kicker issues, neither of which are situations, where you can profitably build a large pot.

I would argue though, that suited rag aces are a bit different because of their potential to make a nut flush and sometimes even be up against a lower flush. For that reason I think playing suited rag aces in a deep stack game certainly has its merits because of excellent implied odds.

One just need to enter the pot with the mentality, that the goal is to hit something big (2 pair or better), and not to get into a betting war with someone, who has a better kicker or a higher pair. So basically one needs to adopt the same kind of mentality as when setmining with baby pairs.

G **gerwingr**
0 points · 9 years ago

in a wild big stakes game, i went in with A2, for 15, and 6 players called, the flop came A29, and i bet out 50, five players called, then the turn was a 10, and another fifty, and five callers again " big pot happening " well, a gent holding a jq, kept playing, and as the turn would be, "not another ace or duce " but a 8 and he bet 200, and i having about 70 in front of me, " thought oh no a straight " and should i call, well i did, i was frustrated, even being a near ten to one against the outcome, So, this hand i had, just illustrates the point on this thread, / lesson, careful, with the rag . see you all at the tables.

L **larskyhnau**
0 points · 8 years ago

That particular situation can happen with any hand other than a full house or a flush. So it does not in particular have anything to do with you playing a rag ace. It would have been just the same, had you flopped 2 pair with AK or KQ.

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How To Play Ace King

By Mark Holland

Ace-King, especially when suited, is a very strong starting hand in No-Limit Holdem Poker. However, unless you connect with the board you will have only an ace-high hand to show down at the end. This makes playing **ace-king** problematic in some circumstances.



This article will look at some of the important no-limit Holdem strategy considerations when playing ace-king. These include your stack size, position at the table and the tendencies of opponents who are already in the pot, and those yet to act.

Basic ace-king strategy.

The worst possible outcome for ace-king is to be in a multi-way [limped pot](#) (</videos/splitsuit/limped-pots/>), out of [position](/basic/position/) ([././basic/position/](/basic/position/)) and then to miss the flop. Under these circumstances the hand should usually be folded to any serious betting action from opponents.

Ace-King is a hand that you definitely do not want to be playing against multiple opponents.

Ace-king is in fact a [drawing hand](/drawing/) ([./drawing/](/drawing/)) – you will usually need to improve to win a showdown. At the same time this hand has a strong likelihood of improving to become the best hand, any ace or king on the board will give you top pair with top kicker. This makes ace-king a hand to play strongly and positively until you encounter resistance, both before the flop and in later betting.

The ideal situation with this hand is that you take control before the flop by playing [aggressive](/general/aggression/) ([././general/aggression/](/general/aggression/)) and positive poker. Raising, especially from position, will thin the field – ideally to a single opponent. If that opponent checks to you on the flop you will often be able to

take the pot away from them with a [continuation bet \(/../plays/continuation-bet/\)](#). When this gets called you have the added advantage of being able to see the river for free if your opponent checks to you after the turn.

You might like the [multi-way cbetting \(/videos/splitsuit/multiway-cbetting/\)](#) video for strategy on dealing with tricky flops when facing 2 or more players. *Hand 2* (3:22) and *Hand 5* (12:36) use AK as examples.

Stack sizes and playing ace king.

The [stack size \(/../concepts/stack-sizes/\)](#) of both you and opponents in the hand are a critical factor in playing ace-king. If the [effective stacks \(/../concepts/stack-sizes/effective/\)](#) (shortest stack in play) are small then your best move is often to get all-in before the flop with this hand. This is common in tournament situations and has two possible outcomes both of which are positive.

If you are up against small stacks, you should try and get all-in before the flop with ace king.

Either the pre-flop raiser (plus any caller) folds allowing you to take a good sized pot. Or if you are called – for example by a pair lower than Kings – you get to see all 5 board cards to improve your hand. This means you are only a little under 50% to win the hand – your [pot equity \(/../mathematics/equity/\)](#) will also be increased when there is blind money or a 3rd player who entered the pot then folded to your re-raise.

When you have a deep stack holding ace-king a pre-flop re-raise can give you valuable information on your opponent's hand. For example an opponent raises 3 times the big blind from middle position and you re-raise a total of 8 or 9 blinds from the button. When you're opponent is holding the hands you really fear – pocket aces or kings – he is likely to put in a re-raise here.

Be wary of 3-bets when you are deep stacked after making a re-raise with ace-king. This could very well mean that your opponent holds aces or kings.

However, pairs [QQ \(/pockets/queens/\)](#) and below and other ace-high hands are more likely to call. Not only have you defined your opponents hand, you have taken control of the hand before the flop – putting you in a position to take the pot away fairly often those times that you do miss the flop.

Player tendencies.

The tendencies of specific players, and indeed the table dynamic as a whole, will also affect the way that you play ace-king. [Before the flop](#) ([../hand-guide/flop/](#)), you may raise to [isolate](#) ([../videos/splitsuit/isolating/](#)), a particularly weak player seated to your right. However when a 'rock' in the same seat has entered the pot a flat call may be the best strategy – as such an opponent is more likely to tell you whether they liked the flop with their post-flop betting patterns.

Another opponent specific move occurs at a 'wild table' here you can flat call a raise from early position in the hope that a wild player later in the betting will re-raise, you can then push all-in over the top representing aces or kings. When called you still have very good equity against the wild player's range – in addition to the overlay of the dead money in the pot. Since ace-king does not play well in a multi-way pot caution is required with this move – you need to be sure that an opponent will re-raise ahead most of the time.

When the betting gets heavy ahead of you a good rule of thumb for playing ace-king, especially when not too deep stacked, is to be the player making the all-in bet and not the one calling this. Ace-king is almost 50% to win against pairs Q-Q and below and 30% to win against [pocket Kings](#) ([../pockets/kings/](#)). However, when you are the player making the last big bet you have the added benefit of fold-equity. The chance that you're opponent may fold increasing the profit from playing this hand considerably.

How to play ace king evaluation.

Good no-limit Holdem play with ace-king involves all of the factors discussed above – but also and awareness of how they work together. For example a re-raise from position to define your opponents hand is only useful against a reasonably competent opponent, from position and with a deep stack.

Against a weaker opponent or with a [short stack](#) ([../general/short-stack/](#)) (15 blinds or less) your best move might be to push all-in immediately. The combination of 'fold equity' ([../mathematics/equity/fold/](#)), with your winning chances giving this play a positive expectation.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy](#) ([/strategy/](#)).

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How To Play Small Pocket Pairs

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

Watch [SplitSuit's Baby Pairs video \(/../../videos/splitsuit/baby-pairs/\)](#) for 33 minutes of strategy dedicated to playing small pocket pairs.

Small pocket pairs range from 22 to 66, where any other higher pair would be considered to be a medium or high pocket pair. These low pairs are deceptively strong, and will often land novice players in a lot of trouble if they are over-valued.

A small pocket pair is usually regarded as a pair between 22 and 66.



A small pocket pair is ahead of the majority of other hands pre-flop as long as an opponent does not hold a higher pocket pair. However, post flop play can be incredibly tricky if our hand does not improve.

So lets find out *how to play small pocket pairs...*

The biggest problem with small pocket pairs.

When holding a small pocket pair, there is a very high chance that the flop will bring over cards. This will then give us an underpair to the board, and it is going to be very difficult to try and find out whether or not we are ahead.

If we make a bet and get called, this gives us little information in whether or not our hand is ahead. Our opponent may have a higher pair, a [drawing hand \(/../drawing/\)](#), a lower pair or any other possible hand. The simple bet and call does not tell us a lot about what our opponent is

holding, and it will prove to be costly to try and find out if we are ahead by betting on the turn ([../../hand-guide/turn/](https://hand-guide.com/turn/)), and river ([../../hand-guide/river/](https://hand-guide.com/river/)).

Small pocket pairs and sets.

The true strength of a small pocket pair lies in when they improve to make a set on the flop. A set is when you make 3-of-a-kind on the flop with a pocket pair, which is different to trips, where you make 3-of-a-kind using one holecard and two cards from the board. **A set is a very hidden and strong hand**, and it is possible to make a lot of money from them when they hit because opponents will not often suspect them.

Find out more about the different types of 3-of-a-kind hands in my article on sets and trips in Texas Hold'em ([../../articles/strategy/sets-vs-trips/](https://hand-guide.com/articles/strategy/sets-vs-trips/)).

So instead of looking to play small pocket pair after the flop to try and find out if we are ahead, **we should just be looking to hit a set or fold**. It is not very profitable and it is very difficult to play a low pocket pair post-flop if it does not improve, so try to avoid doing so.

With small pocket pairs, the best strategy is to aim to make a set on the flop and play on, or fold if you do not hit a set.

Pot odds and mathematics of hitting a set.

The odds of flopping a set with a pocket pair are 7 to 1, which means that we will hit a set 1 in every 8 flops we see. These odds are not too great, and according to pot odds ([../../mathematics/pot-odds/](https://hand-guide.com/mathematics/pot-odds/)), it means that we will rarely be getting good enough odds pre-flop to call to see a flop and try and make our set.

The pot odds basically suggest that we will be paying too much for something that will not happen frequently enough to make it worth our while. But, there is something very important that we are leaving out of the pot odds equation, and that is the implied odds ([../../mathematics/implied-odds/](https://hand-guide.com/mathematics/implied-odds/)), we have from hitting a set.

Implied odds make playing small pocket pairs worthwhile.

The implied odds are how much we expect to win after we make our hand, and I can tell you now, **the implied odds we have for sets are HUGE**. It is not uncommon for players to lose all their money to sets if they catch a decent part of the flop, because they very rarely suspect that their

opponent has one.

Set strategy and how to play small pocket pairs.

There are two main requirements for playing small pocket pairs:

1. The opponents should have relatively deep stacks. About 70BB+ should do the trick.
2. I would avoid calling raises over 7BBs to see a flop.

1) Play small pocket pairs against deep stacked opponents.

The deeper our opponent's stack the better. This is because we are not going to hit a set too often, but when we do we want to have the opportunity to be paid off handsomely. If our opponent has a small stack, the reward for hitting our set and getting all-in will not justify calling raises when we are only going to hit a set 1 time in 8.

The deeper the stack, the greater the implied odds, the greater the potential reward and the more +EV ([../../mathematics/expected-value/](https://pokerstrategy.com/mathematics/expected-value/)). calling to hit a set becomes. You can find out a little more information on this sort of topic in the article on [stack to pot ratios](https://pokerstrategy.com/concepts/spr/) ([../../concepts/spr/](https://pokerstrategy.com/concepts/spr/)).

2) Be happy to call up to 7BB raises preflop.

The bigger the preflop raise, the worse the pot odds are and the less profitable calling to hit a set becomes over the long run. The standard preflop raise however is about 3 or 4 BBs, which is fine for calling in an attempt to hit a set.

However, our implied odds after hitting a set are huge, so we can afford to pay a little more to see a flop.

Therefore, as a general rule, I would recommend calling up to **7BB raises** before the flop, simply because we can expect to get paid off pretty handsomely when we hit our set.

Don't be afraid to call up to 7BB raises (or possibly a little more depending on the situation) with a small pocket pair. It may seem like a lot, but the returns are huge when you hit a set.

Advanced small pocket pair strategy.

If you have a strong post-flop game, it can work to your advantage to raise with pocket pairs before the flop. This will give you the initiative ([../../concepts/initiative/](#)) in the hand and help you to take down a few extra uncontested pots along with the bigger ones when you hit your set.

However, if you a beginner player just getting to grips with small pocket pairs, it will be easier to take the more passive route of just calling before the flop as opposed to raising. Both methods are profitable, so go with what you feel most comfortable with. Raising preflop with small pocket pairs will be more +EV, but that's only if you know what you're doing.

Implied odds and sets.

I've already covered this point, but I want to stress the importance of stack sizes ([../../concepts/stack-sizes/](#)) one more time to really drive it home.

If our opponent has a short stack, our implied odds will decrease greatly because there is going to be less for us to potentially win when we hit our set. Similarly, if our opponents have big stacks then we are getting terrific implied odds for hitting our set.

The smaller our opponent's stack is, the lower our implied odds. The bigger our opponent's stack is, the greater our implied odds.

This means we can give ourselves a little more room to work with when calling raises pre-flop; if our opponents have short stacks we should avoid calling raises and try to get in as cheaply as possible or not at all, whereas if our opponent has a big stack then we can afford to call a little extra more to try and hit our set because of the good implied odds.

How to play small pocket pairs evaluation.

As you probably noticed, the strategy involving playing small pocket pairs centres primarily around the concept of implied odds. The implied odds explain the reasoning behind the small pocket pair strategy, so you should try and familiarize yourself with them.

The whole article basically elaborated on the basic strategy of seeing cheap flops with small pocket pairs, and then only continuing with the hand if you hit a set. If that is the only thing that you take away from reading this article, then don't worry, as you have probably helped save/earn yourself a lot of money in the future from that alone.

Don't be afraid to call big raises before the flop with small pocket pairs, but be prepared to let them go if you do not hit that set. It's a simple yet effective strategy with any pair between 22 and 66.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

in my opinion. if you're playing any hand in a way where u need to hit it to win you're screwed. constantly folding after missed flops is gonna kill you unless you get lucky and hit one early and take a pot without showing the hand. that way they can't quite get wise to you. maybe like a phil helmuth would but still. if you start calling big then folding easily at the start after like two or three hands the opponent will definitely be thinking you are playing pocket pairs that way

this can be applied to any strategy in poker dependent on the cards you hit. there's also other situations like when u know there's other bigger pocket pairs out there. at 7 times the big blind you're gonna be looking at that a lot

you might wanna shove on say a pocket jack in a really aggressive move to get them to fold the better hand. or try and get them to slow play the hand after the flop. then you might turn a four and school someone



larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

If you only cold call with baby pairs in order to setmine and therefore end up having a very high fold to flop C-bet percentage, then good opponents will probably pick up on that and not pay you of enough, when you flop a set. And you will never get to see the turn for free, because they will C-bet you 100% of the time. But I think the problem can easily be solved by including other hand types in your cold calling range, which you play in a less “fit or fold” way.

And if you don't like cold calling with baby pairs to setmine, or if its just not profitable in a certain situation due to short stack sizes or player specific reasons, then there is really nothing wrong with folding them. In my opinion one of the biggest mistakes, poker players make on average, is thinking, that they "have" to play all their pocket pairs, because "they are strong hands". That is really not the case, and certainly not with baby pairs.

L **larskyhnau**
0 points · 11 years ago

deleted by author

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 10 years ago

I'll generally limp in, unless raised or reraised preflop, depending on aggression of players in the room. Nothing better than hitting a set with your 4's on a 4, A, 8 rainbow flop. Considering they are well hidden, these sets can wipe out other players entire chip stacks.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

Yup, I have been basically playing these 'no set no bet' in full ring but the article made me think more about calling bigger PF raises by short stacks due to the implied odds so that is very useful. Thanks!

G **Greg**
0 points · 12 years ago

Thanks Ruprech!

If you get the chance I'd definitely recommend chekcing out Split's vid on playing baby pairs: <http://www.thepokerbank.com/...> (<http://www.thepokerbank.com/videos/splitsuit/baby-pairs/>).

It's superbly thorough, more so than this article alone! Split's a FR player too, which is even handier.

A **aron**
0 points · 7 years ago

We win 1 in every 8 hands. Lets say the BB is \$1 and opp raises to \$7 everytime we have pocket pair. So every 8 hands we are expected to lose 7×7 times= \$49 and on the eighth hand we'd need to win \$50+ from our opponent who has stack of 70 BB so about \$70. I think this would be quite hard to do so as they wouldnt be so aggressive if we called their standard half pot raise of \$10 (lil more than half the pot). How do we win?

W **Wang Hui**
0 points · 7 years ago

r u crazy?, pocket pair win sometime even with hitting the set. its just matter how you play it

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Pocket Aces Strategy

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#)

Watch [SplitSuit's AA video \(../../../videos/splitsuit/aa/\)](#) for a definitive guide on playing pocket aces in Texas Hold'em.

Looking down and seeing 'the bullets' is one of the highlights of [Texas Hold'em \(/\)](#). Pocket aces is the #1 starting hand in Hold'em; however, this is where people make the first mistake.

Pocket aces are by no means invincible, and if they are not played with caution you stand to lose a big pot. So allow this quick guide to help you learn **how to play pocket aces profitably** the next time you pick those bad boys up.



Always look to make a bet or raise with pocket aces.

We have to realize that pocket aces are not the type of hand we want to play against multiple opponents. **The ideal situation is to be heads up on the flop.** Therefore ' [limping in \(/videos/splitsuit/limped-pots/\)](#)' in early [position \(../../basic/position/\)](#) is a dangerous tactic and you should avoid doing so. After all, if you do limp then you could be facing numerous opponents on the flop, at which point you have to be prepared to fold your hand to any significant amount of action unless you hit your set.

Always look to raise with pocket aces as opposed to limping in and trying to be tricky. The last thing you want to happen is to be facing multiple opponents on the flop.

A second situation that could arise from limping in is being raised by another player. When facing this raise most people will re-raise once more and this will set alarm bells ringing in the heads of your opponents, because what kind of hand are you holding if you limp then re-raise the raiser?

9 times out of 10 the person making this move has a monster starting hand. Therefore you should more often than not raise when holding pocket aces, it lets your opponents know that you have a big hand but not how big, and it helps to define your opponents hands if they call.

Post-flop pocket aces strategy.

On the flop ([../../hand-guide/flop/](#)) you again will want to be betting and raising, after all this is the only way you are going to be able to get more money into the pot. If you are heads up against one opponent you may want to check and induce a bluff if he is an aggressive ([../../general/aggression/](#)) type of player when in first position.

In general, you want to continue betting and raising to build the pot as much as possible with pocket aces. It is not advisable to continuously slowplay this sort of hand. You make more money by betting.

Be sure never to slowplay if the board is coordinated and your opponent is drawing to a straight or a flush; you want to make him pay and give him the wrong pot odds ([../../mathematics/pot-odds/](#)) to draw to it.

(Note: When playing online make sure you leave a little time between betting into the pot on the flop. When people raise pre-flop and then bet a large amount into the pot immediately when it is their turn to act it is a big giveaway that they are holding the over-pair, so take a little time!).

Tips for playing pocket aces.

- Do not slowplay.
- Try not to get too attached to the hand.
- The less opponents in the hand the better.
- Remember that pocket Aces are not indestructible.

It must be stressed that **aces are definitely not a hand to be slowplayed**. Many amateurs fall into this bad habit because they are the #1 starting hand ([../../basic/starting-hand-selection/](#)). But this is only before the flop. After the flop it is a different matter, if you don't hit a set just remember... all you have is one pair.

You should always be thinking, "Okay, what could my opponent have that would beat me?" and try to figure out whether he has that type of hand. If you try and slowplay your hand to the end, do you think your opponent is going to call a large bet or an all-in with ace high or a pair? Because those are the only hands you will be beating at the end. If your opponent does call, its goodbye to your stack as very few are going to call with anything less than two-pair.

Pocket aces strategy evaluation.

Aces are not a hand to be slow played. The ideal situation is to be all in on the flop against your opponents. However this is not going to be likely, especially in a cash game. The second best situation is to use the tactics mentioned above by minimizing the number of opponents and getting money into the pot by betting and even raising.

But remember, with pocket Aces you only have one pair, so be prepared to let them go when facing a lot of action. The ability to lay down strong hands what makes the difference between good and great players.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy_\(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

First of all thanks for a very usefull and informative site. While I understand the basic reasoning behind the advice given in this particular article, I would tend to disagree with the statement, that the goal with AA is to get to the flop against only 1 opponent.

The reason is, that AA is such a strong starting hand, that from a pure math point of view, the more hands it is played against at the same stakes, the more money you will win in the long run. So AA should of course not be slowplayed. But if 2 or 3 players are willing to make or call big raises before the flop rather than just 1, that is an extremely + EV situation for the player holding AA.

Lets take as an example AA vs. KQ suited and assume 1 player is all in before the flop, stakes 100\$. AA has 81,5% chance to win the bet, so on average AA will win 63\$. Lets assume then, that another player also call with 99. AA now only has 70,1% chance to win the pot, because AA can now also lose to a set of 9's and some weird 4 card straights etc. But the pot is bigger being 300\$ rather than 200\$, so on average AA will win 110\$ from this bet or nearly twice as much as from the bet against only 1 other opponent. And whats not to like about that?

Some might argue, that the more players get to the flop without being all in, the more negative implied odds AA will face from other players having flopped two pairs or better. And while that is true, in my opinion this disadvantage is outweighed by the fact, that AA will also have more positive implied odds from the other players in the hand, the more of them, there are.

The more players in the hand, the more likely that someone will have flopped top pair, a lower overpair, straight- or flushdraws or even second pair, gutshots or pure bluffs, which will all generate long term profit to the player holding AA, even though he will sometimes lose the pot, when e.g. the flush or straight actually fills on the turn or river.

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Home ► Strategy ► Hands ► Kings ►

Pocket Kings Strategy

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

Pocket kings are the second best starting hand in Texas Holdem. There is no other starting hand in hold'em except [pocket aces \(/aces/\)](#) that are stronger pre-flop. However, just like "pocket rockets", the "cowboys" can also get you into trouble at the tables.



Pocket Kings have one fundamental flaw when compared to pocket aces: the possibility of an opponent making a higher pair. Nonetheless, this quick guide on **how to play pocket kings** should help you make the most of them in any hand...

Basic pocket kings strategy.

You must be aware that KK is a very vulnerable hand as any ace that appears on the board could easily pair with an opponent's holecard to give them the higher pair than you. Even if your opponents do not have an ace in the hole, the mere presence of an ace on the board can be enough to scare you away from betting as heavily and extracting maximum profit from the hand.

There is roughly a **20% chance that an ace will fall on any flop**, which is more often than you would think.

For these reasons **it is important to bet or raise with pocket kings pre-flop**. Similarly to pocket aces, you do not want to be in a [multi-way pot when seeing the flop \(/videos/splitsuit/multiway-cbetting/\)](#), otherwise you will be giving your opponents a greater opportunity to take the pot away from you, so you will want to be seeing a flop with a maximum 2 opponents only.

You want to bet an amount that will help you determine the strength of your opponent's hands. It is important that you attempt to find out whether or not they could possibly holding an ace when they call so that you can make better judgments when the flop comes down. This is a key point, as when raising with pocket kings:

You want to raise enough to weed out the weaker hands, and enough to know that your opponents will have at least an ace to call you.

This means that you can give yourself a greater ability to put your opponent on a hand, and giving yourself a better opportunity to fold to significant signs of strength if the ace does hit the board.

Post-flop play with pocket kings can be sub divided into two situations.

1. A flop *without* an ace
2. A flop *with* an ace

Flop without an ace.

This situation is far more pleasant than the second, but it does not mean you are home and dry yet. If you do not make a set you still only have that one pair, so we are in no position to be slowplaying our hand just yet.

You want to play this kind of flop in a similar way to the way you would play pocket aces on the flop, by betting and raising as much as possible to extract a decent amount of money from players who cannot let go of top pair. Furthermore, you want to continue to make sure that your opponents are not receiving the correct pot odds ([../../mathematics/pot-odds/](http://pokerstrategy.com/mathematics/pot-odds/)) to chase after any flush or straight draws.

Even if the flop looks pretty safe and doesn't offer up any obvious draws, I am still going to be betting and raising strongly to avoid letting other players catch up and make two pair or better. In addition, you don't build a big pot by checking and calling, so grab the bull by the horns and start playing some aggressive poker ([../../general/aggression/](http://pokerstrategy.com/general/aggression/)). If your opponents immediately fold, it's no big loss, as it would never have developed into a big pot at any stage of the hand anyway.

Don't be afraid to bet with an overpair like pocket kings. You don't win big pots by playing passively.

Flop with an ace.

This is obviously the less favorable position [on the flop \(../../hand-guide/flop/\)](#), because if your opponent holds an ace then he has already got you beat. As already mentioned the presence of an ace on the board is enough to prevent you from obtaining any substantial amount from your opponent if you do hold the best hand because the ace will slow your betting down.

This means that your main objective on this flop is to determine whether or not your opponent does indeed hold the ace. This can be done by betting in such a manner that will give you as much information as possible depending on what action your opponent takes. Unfortunately there are no definitive plays to help determine your opponent's hand, so you will have to rely on your knowledge about your opponent to influence what plays you think you should make.

As a rule of thumb, I will generally make a [continuation bet \(../../plays/continuation-bet/\)](#) and go from there. If I get called, I evaluate the situation to the best of my ability to try and figure out whether to fire again [on the turn \(../../hand-guide/turn/\)](#). At the end of the day though, an ace on the flop really does throw a spanner in the works when you hold pocket kings, and there is not a lot that you can do about it. Just try your best to salvage the situation. A continuation bet is always a good starting point.

A continuation is always a good place to start when an ace falls on the flop when you hold pocket kings.

Pocket kings strategy evaluation.

Many beginner players find it hard to let go of pocket kings even with an ace on the board. The fact that they hold the second best starting hand clouds their mind to the fact that they are easily beaten, and continue to see the hand through and end up losing a decent amount of chips to their opponent that did indeed pair their ace.

With aces and kings, it is best to remember that there are many hands that can beat you after the flop, because if you do not hit a set, you only have one pair at the end of the day. Try to look more toward the ways in which you can lose, instead of the ways in which you can win, without obscuring your mind too much with negativity.

As a general rule of thumb, bet strongly and avoid slowplaying your hand. You don't want to give opponents the opportunity to catch up and take a big pot away from you.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](#).

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? **Anonymous**
0 points · 8 years ago

I was in a hand recently where the player in front raised preflop 35\$ on a 1\$/2\$ no limit game, I flat called with pocket kings and a player behind me called, flop came 762 all hearts and the preflop raiser went all in, only putting him on a/an flush draw or pocket pair I called and the person behind folded the turn and river were blanks J of clubs 3 of diamonds and he turns over 76 two pair, now obviously I made a few errors not reraising him preflop but I only expected to be behind against A's given his preflop action. I had the king of hearts, do you guys think this trapping style of play was just unlucky or would a fold have been best. I calculated the odds and I found out with all my outs I actually had a slight advantage about 52% favorite even though behind at that point. I assumed I'd most likely be up against a pocket pair like A's Q's or lower but in my opinion I should've maybe picked a better spot where he wasn't shoving 200\$ after only a relatively small raise

L **larskyhnau**
0 points · 8 years ago

Don't beat yourself up over it Steven. You played your hand just fine. You were probably playing against an agro-fish (very aggressive but bad player), and in the long run such players are easy to beat. But you have to realize, that playing against them will increase your variance a lot, because they will force you to gamble with them.

So if losing 200\$ in a single pot due to a bad beat like this makes you feel uncomfortable, you should do one of the following:

- Play lower stakes tables
- Play as a capper (40 BB buyin)
- Change table when you realize, that an agro-fish is at the table

I would label this player as an agro-fish, because his preflop raise was 17½ BB, which is way too large both as a raise for value and as a bluff. It's true, that you could have considered 3-betting him preflop, which would essentially be a shove (going all in), because it would make you pot committed. But in my opinion

its fine also to just call with KK against such a fish, because it allows him to make mistakes postflop, when he overvalue hands like top pair or a slight overpair.

He would probably not have folded, so you would have lost the same amount of money, whichever line you took against him.

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larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

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larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

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Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

When to discard pocket kings.player X went all in ,I had pocket KK,and went all in.She had AA and won,

?

Anonymous

0 points · 6 years ago

God poker makes me crazy. Just got my stack taken off me on a 6 person cash game. I had kk raised 3bb in early position. One guy raised me a little again, everyone else folded. I raised him all in as he had been playing very loose on all sorts of hands. I wanted him to fold so I didn't bump into an ace. He shows q,q I'm thinking great I'm totally dominating him like I thought I was. Can you guess what happened ? Yep you guessed it queen on the flop. It took all my self control to not throw my lap top out the window. I would like to ask what are the chances of this ? What did I do wrong ? And finally although rhetorical why does it always happen to me.

Angry Mike

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How To Put Players On A Hand

By Chris "casaubon" Mortell

Putting a player on a hand is at the very heart of good poker play, yet often massively misunderstood. Most people assume that the goal is to put a player on two exact cards.



This would be great, but the truth is it's rarely possible without having spent hours and hours at the table with a person. Occasionally you may find someone so powerfully uncreative that you'll know exactly when they've got a huge hand and when they don't. Enjoy it, because it's rare.

But wait. All those books you've read say you should play the player. How are you supposed to do that if you can't hope to accurately put someone on two exact cards?

Easy.

There are only a few actions you can take in poker:

1. You can raise.
2. You can call.
3. You can fold.

No limit adds the added excitement of being able to bet varying amounts (see [bet sizing \(/strategy/basic/bet-sizing/\)](/strategy/basic/bet-sizing/) for more information), but people tend to bet similar amounts whenever they bet. So with such a limited number of actions, people will tend to take the same actions with different hands. This is why it's so hard to put someone on two exact cards.

The key to making sense of this situation is not to guess. It's to understand that while our information is limited, we do have information. We'll call that information a range.

A range is simply all of the hands that a player would take a particular action with. For example, when under the gun (utg) in a six-handed online \$200NL game, a solid player will raise utg with 22+/JTs+/QTs+/KTs+/AJo/KQo.

That's actually a fairly tight range, close to maybe only 17% of all hands dealt. In some ways, it's easy to deal with someone when they have a narrow range. Fold your bad hands, reraise your good hands, and call with those sneaky [implied odds](https://mathematics/implied-odds/) hands that can flop huge. Easy game.

What gets much trickier is post-flop play. To illustrate, let me talk through a hand to demonstrate how thinking about a range happens from [preflop](https://hand-guide/preflop/) to [river](https://hand-guide/river/).

Giving opponents a range example.

I'm dealt Q♣Q♥ in the CO of a \$200NL game. Folds to me and I open for \$7. Folds to the BB who calls.

The BB is a player I'd call loose, but not stupid. He calls too much preflop, he isn't very aggressive postflop, and he'll tend to overvalue hands. He had \$159 at the start of the hand, \$150 as we go to the flop. I cover.

So now a few things to note. I'm in the CO and I raise a lot in the CO. I attempt to [steal the blinds](https://stealing-blinds/) at a clip of about 35% when given the chance. That's a lot of hands that aren't very good. So my range is wide. Likewise, the BB likes to call a lot and probably has some vague notion that I like to raise a lot. Bad players see people raising and decide to stand up to them by calling a lot more.

So he probably thinks I have a wide range of hands (if he's thinking about it at all), and I know that he has a wide range of hands.

The flop.

We see a flop of T♣5♥3♦. After the rake, there's \$15.5 in the middle.

That's about as good a flop as you can see if you have queens. Unless the BB has TT/55/33, I'm ahead of his hand and he likely has five outs or fewer to improve. The BB checks to me, and I bet \$10. I don't want to bet big here. The reason has to do with ranges.

If I bet big, then he'll very often fold hands like 77 or 76. He's of course never folding a flopped set. He probably won't fold a ten for one big bet on the flop, but he might get nervous on the turn or river and not put all his money in with his five-out draw that will rarely get there.

On this type of board. I want to get a lot of calls. He'll be making a big mistake by calling, so I don't mind betting a small amount. I make money here not by getting him to call big bets rarely, but by getting him to call small bets, often and incorrectly.

So, like I said, \$10.

The BB checkraises ([../..plays/check-raise/](#)) to \$27 total.

Well that's a surprise.

Three things. First, weird raise size. This is a site with a "Bet pot" button, and people love to use it. The BB has intentionally not used it and instead made a small bet. I'm pretty confused by this. He could definitely do this with a set, trying to build a bit of a pot and stack me on later streets. But he could also think a pair of tens is good here. Hands like T9s, KTo, AT, JT, etc. are exactly the types of hands that call out of the BB in this spot. Good players wouldn't have hands like this, but the BB isn't a good player, so we can't eliminate them entirely.

So I decide to just call the \$17 more. At this point, I think his range is T9s+/JTo+/TT/55/33.

Some people might say I'm being generous here, but remember that this is a fundamentally weak player. Vs. a good player, I'd probably call the \$17 too, but I'd call for an entirely different reason. More on that in a bit.

With my call, the pot, minus rake, is \$68. The effective stacks ([/strategy/concepts/stack-sizes/effective/](#)) are now \$125.

The turn.

The turn is an offsuit 6 (making it T♣ 5♥ 3♦ 6♠), completing the rainbow board.

The BB checks.

Ok, that's weird. What could this mean?

Well, he could be getting fancy, going for two checkraises in a row with a set. That's an odd play, but people who aren't good at poker tend to make odd plays. Two pair is entirely unlikely, because of what we've estimated his flop range to be. The six is a complete brick. If he had a pair of tens,

he didn't improve. If he has a set, he doesn't need to improve. Online, you'll see this called way ahead/way behind (</strategy/concepts/way-ahead-way-behind/>), or just WA/WB.

But let's not give him too much credit.

He might realize that he made a small flop raise, and so maybe thinks we're getting fancy with AK. Or maybe we have a weak ten, like T9 (which is dominated by the majority of the BBs ten holdings). We still have him on the same range as the flop. We know he didn't improve. But we think he might call a turn bet not just with his sets, but a lot of his top pairs too.

So I bet \$40.

Again, this isn't a spot where I want to make a big bet. I want him to call often. If he has anything but a set, he's making a substantial mistake calling this bet, so I'm going to make a lot of medium-ish to small bets, and look to get called very often.

Now is the moment of truth in the hand as well. If the BB c/r here, I will probably call, mostly out of frustration, partly out of fear that he's simply overplaying a ten. If he pushes in his remaining \$85, I don't expect to be a favourite to win that money, but there's another \$140 in the pot on top of that \$85, so I simply can't give away my equity ([../mathematics/equity/](http://mathematics/equity/)) in that money.

Instead, the BB just calls. I'm quite confident now he has a ten and is going down with the ship. I'm not sure what his kicker is, but I'm positive he has a ten in his hand.

The river.

The river is a nine, which only improves T9, the BB checks, I bet enough to put him all in for another \$85 and he calls getting 2.7:1 with ATo.

Giving an opponent a range analysis.

Seems like a simple hand. Overpair wins 3/4s of a buyin from a calling station with tptk. But let's think about how different this hand would be against a good player.

After the flop checkraise, I'd be putting a good player on a range of something like ATs/88-TT/55/33/76s/+some bluffs. A good player will be bluffing me a fair amount on a board like this, either with his gutshot or total air. A good player knows that I have absolutely nothing a lot of the time. Even if I had a reasonably strong hand, like 88, I'd have trouble calling even a small checkraise in this spot, because it's very likely I'll have to call turn and river bets with only a 23:1 shot at improving and no real way to know whether my hand is good or not without losing a stack.

A good player is taking advantage of my weak range on this type of board with a completely different range of hands.

And it's a legitimately tough spot for queens. If I push, he doesn't call very often, but when he does call, I'm a 23:1 dog almost always. Because queens are at the very top of my range here (the only better hands I could have are 33/55/TT/AA/KK), I really hate folding to him, because that lets him succeed with too many of his bluffs.

So against a good player, I'm calling the small flop raise too. And given the stacks, I'm prepared to push over a turn bet fairly often (unless it's some insane card like an ace or another T).

The turn is where it gets very different.

When that brick rolls off on the turn (though that six isn't a total brick for someone bluffing w/a gutshot) and he checks, I'm now in a really weird spot. The pot is \$68. There is only \$125 left to bet. Yet if I make a bet trying to get the rest of that \$125 in the middle, I'm going to fold out most of his bluffs (maybe he'll get stubborn with a rare ten or his gutshot+pair), and lose \$125 to his monsters.

So against a good player, I would check this turn back.

A check allows him to take gutshots or ace-high bluffs to the river. But we're not really concerned about that much. Four-outers or three-outers are nothing to be afraid of. What we're more concerned about is that he'll still have a reasonably wide range on the river. So if a brick like that deuce rolls off and the good player now bets \$55 on the river, we can snap-call and expect very often to see a bluff.

One last thing to notice.

Against the bad player, I was able, and fairly quickly, to put him on a hand that had a ten in it. He might have shown up on the river with a set, or he might have c/f the turn with some weird bluff. But mainly, when he c/c the turn, I know he's got a ten. I don't know if it's T9 or AT, and I'm not going to pretend to be smart enough to know. But I know pretty well where I'm at, and I managed to win a \$300+ pot because of it.

But against the good player, I'm genuinely in the dark. He might have A3. He might have 55. He might have ATs. Because I don't know, I have to play a much smaller pot, and I'll probably lose even that smaller pot more often.

That isn't an accident.

You're going to find yourself in a lot tougher spots vs. good players. You'd be insane to try to put them on exact hands. It would be dangerous to try. You would have stopped playing poker (making correct decisions based on the information you have) and started playing a guessing game.

Take the information you have and make the best decisions you can. After that, it's up to the cards.

The article was written for ThePokerBank by Chris 'casaubon' Mortell. Chris was a regular and well known poster at the old Cardplayer.com Forums.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

hey greg, searche the site could not find anything so can u please do a artical on polarized and depolarized 3-betting ranges?

L

larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

Nice article and nice hand, if the example is real. It is a very good example of good hand reading in my opinion.

The situation with having a slight overpair on a T-high or J-high board is one, where you really need to think about your opponents preflop range, when you face that raise or maybe just a big bet.

Recently I was involved in a big pot at a full ring 25NL table, where I raised preflop with QQ from early position, got 2 callers, faced a squeeze from a player in the blinds, called the squeeze and ended up in a 4-way pot with about 40BB on the table at the flop.

On the flop the squeezor from the blinds overbet showed for another 60BB (he started with 70BB only), so now it was decision time. Flop was J, T, X, so on the surface it looked like a good flop for QQ, since there were no overcards.

However when you think about, what a standard squeeze range looks like, then it wasn't a good flop for QQ at all. A standard squeeze range of around 3,5% is TT+ and AK. QQ has 52,4% equity against that range, so calling the squeeze in position is obviously correct particularly considering, that you will likely have a decent amount of implied odds, if you get lucky and flop a set, and he flops an overpair or top pair.

However on a J, T, X board, QQ's equity share drops to only 39,7% the reason being, that the only hands, QQ dominated before the flop (JJ and TT), have now improved to a set.

Given the pot odds it would have been about break even to call with 39,7% equity. But does anyone really overshove an unimproved AK for 60 BB against 3 players, even with the added equity of a gutshot? Or any other bluff or 2. best stuff, if he actually had a wider squeeze range then 3,5%? In my opinion most likely not. So when he overshoved, I was pretty sure his range was sets, overpairs and really nothing else.

And since QQ doesn't beat a single hand in that range, for me it was a pretty easy fold even without needing to consider the added problem of having 2 more players left to react after me. Another player behind me called, and rather unsurprisingly he lost 60 BB to AA.

In combination with the example given in the article, I think this example illustrate the importance of not only thinking about your own hand but also assigning a realistic range of hands to your opponent(s) based on his actions. And how this can drastically influence the way you need to value and play hands like a slight overpair.

There are situations, where you can value-town someone with a slight overpair as described in the article. But there are certainly also situations, where you need to be disciplined and fold a slight overpair, because your opponent just isn't betting or raising with a worse hand than yours, or at least not anywhere near enough of the time.

And how you handle these situations with slight overpairs, both when you are ahead, and when you are behind, can really make or break your winrate.

G

guest

0 points · 10 years ago

Very nice post.

J

Junior Martindale

0 points · 7 years ago

One would think that a "good" player is reraising almost anyone from the CO with A10o in inferior position in an attempt to end the hand pre flop.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

The wealth of info on this site is more than adequate for the serious learner to measurably improve their game! That Greg Walker is able to attract so many top notch contributors is definitely to his credit. Let's band together and award him an Oscar or Bafta for creative site development!



Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

This is a most helpful article and gives a very good example of hand reading. One that I shall be reading more than once.



Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

Hand reading isn't all that hard to do, but it does take a lot of practice to get down esp in the heat of action. And so the trick for most of us - who aren't clairvoyant or otherwise Godlike - is to follow the lead and then, after mastering the art, take the lead...!



Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

I'm getting better at putting players on hands online, but frankly still struggle with the short time in which I must make decisions. Usually when I try to complete a sophisticated thought, I'm nearly out of time when I come to it, or must make a snap-decision since I will run out of time otherwise! I'm sure the speed will come with time and experience, but it can be hard to be limited by the (very short) clock.



michaelw

0 points · 5 years ago

'Hands like T9s, KTo, AT, JT, etc. are exactly the types of hands that call out of the BB in this spot. Good players wouldn't have hands like this, but the BB isn't a good player, so we can't eliminate them entirely.'
could someone explain why the good player wouldn't have these hands?

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Betting Into The Preflop Raiser

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

Being out of [position \(/../basic/position/\)](#) in any hand of poker is not going to be make your decisions easy. However, this does not mean that we can't use a few tricks to make it work to our advantage when we hit our strong hands.



This article will discuss how you can work around the fact that you are out of position to your opponent and use it to your advantage to maximize your wins with a strong hand on the flop. Here's my quick guide to **betting into the preflop raiser**.

Betting into preflop raiser example.

Lets say we are heads up in a Holdem game and **out of position to an opponent after we called their preflop raise**.

Ideally, this isn't a situation that you would want to find yourself in, because it means that you would have called a raise preflop knowing that you would be out of position for the rest of the hand. So to be in this position in the first place, we probably have a [relatively strong \(/videos/wilcox/articles/relative-hand-strength/\)](#) hand with big cards, or a hand with a lot of potential like a [small pocket pair \(/../hands/pockets/small/\)](#).

On the flop.

When we get to the flop, **it is standard play for most players to check to the raiser regardless of whether we made a strong hand or not**. Similarly, it is the standard play for our opponent to make a [continuation bet \(/../plays/continuation-bet/\)](#) to take down the pot, regardless if they have a

strong hand or not.

This is because players in our sort of position will want to see how our opponent will react after our check, and the majority of the time our opponent will make a standard continuation bet in an attempt to capitalize on the weakness we have shown from our check. If you play at a high enough level for long enough, you will see this take place time after time.

We are obviously going to be folding our hand if we have not connected with the flop after the continuation bet from our opponent. However, if we have made a strong hand, then many players will be tempted check their hand to their opponent in anticipation that they will bet out, and then we can come over the top with a check-raise and trap them. This all sounds well and good, but when you think about it logically, **you are missing out on a prime opportunity to extract a nice amount of money from your opponent.**

If we make a check-raise ([../..plays/check-raise/](#)) play with our strong hand in this situation, one of two things are likely to happen.

1. Our opponent will fold any weak or mediocre holding
2. Our opponent will call and become very wary about our hand

Because the check-raise is such a powerful play, we are basically telling our opponents that we have the best hand. Therefore they are going to fold any weak or decent hand, and possibly call with their second best strong hand but be wary of continuing with the hand.

The check raise gives away too much information about the strength of your hand, whereas a bet from first position doesn't give much away.

Sure we could be bluffing ([../..basic/bluffing/](#)), but it would be a dangerous play, and so our opponent would not want to take the risk to find out if we are by calling or re-raising with a mediocre or even a strong hand. So the majority of the time we are going to be **cutting off our action at the flop when we have a strong hand**, and not giving ourselves the opportunity to extract more money on future betting rounds.

Playing strong hands against the preflop raiser.

In my opinion, a great way to play a strong hand in this situation on the flop is to simply bet out.

By betting out straight away on the flop, we are making it look as though we have a mediocre hand and that we are trying to stand our ground and take the pot.

You will often find that any intermediate player that comes out with a bet on the flop is making a feeble attempt to win the pot with their half decent hand, and so a simple raise on our part when in position is often going to be enough to get them out of the pot. So if we are betting out with our strong hand, we are making it look as though we are that feeble player hoping to sneak the pot away.

Now most intermediate to advanced players are aware of the fact that players make this kind of bet to try and win the pot, and so it is pretty likely that they are going to raise with any high pair, over-pair, draw or even on a bluff. So at the end of the day, **the likelihood that we are going to get raised is pretty high.**

Therefore we will have already increased the amount we can expect to win from the hand, because we now have our opponent putting 3 or 4 times the amount into the pot than they would have done if we attempted a check raise. On top of this, our hand is still disguised from our opponent and so we have the potential to win more money on future betting rounds.

Example (and advantages) of betting out first.

If we make a call to see a flop with a hand like 6♣ 6♥ and the flop comes 2♦ 6♠ J♥, we are in a great position to make a killing.

By betting out, our opponent is likely to assume we have a mediocre hand like a pair of jacks or sixes, and so they will re-raise us with any overpair or hand like KJ or [AJ \(/videos/splitsuit/inverse-3/\)](#), because they will feel that they still have the best hand. If we check-raise however, our opponent will be wary of the strength of our hand and reconsider the strength of their jack, and slow down with any overpair. So betting out will set us up for that bigger win each time.

There are far more advantages to betting out first as opposed to check raising, so there is no need to try and play tricky poker.

From here on out we have to make the decision on whether or not to call or re-raise this raise from our opponent. In general, we should look to call if the board looks safe and look to raise if the board appears to be dangerous with potential draws.

It is likely that we can win more money [on the turn \(.../hand-guide/turn/\)](#) and [river \(.../hand-guide/river/\)](#) if we call, because as far as our opponent knows we could well be holding onto our mediocre hand hoping for the best. But then we don't want to give them the opportunity to draw out on us by calling. So you have to weigh up whether it is going to be more profitable in the long run to call and try and win more, or raise and take down the pot.

But who knows; if you raise, you may still get a call and win a pretty sizeable pot.

Betting into the preflop raiser evaluation.

This kind of play assumes that we are out of position and heads up to an opponent that knows a bit about the game of poker. This is because we will be relying on the fact that they will see our bet out as a sign of weakness, and raise us in an attempt to stop the action and win the pot.

Sure, sometimes our opponent will fold when we bet out, **but a lot of the time we will be raised and be in a prime position to win a much bigger pot than if we had attempted a check raise.** So we will be winning more money in the long run by betting out and winning a huge pot every now and then, rather than trying to be sneaky and frequently win small pots. So try betting out when you hit a [monster flop \(/videos/splitsuit/flopped-monsters/\)](/videos/splitsuit/flopped-monsters/). You will be surprised at how much more you will be winning overall.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

Donk betting also works great against a habitual floater. You can then check-call the turn and make a small vauebet on the river or check-raise them if you think they'll fire a river bullet.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

Lets say we are heads up in a Holdem game and out of position to an opponent after we called their preflop raise.

So to be in this position in the first place, we probably have a relatively strong hand with big cards, or a hand

with a lot of potential like a small pocket pair. This doesn't make sense because it means we called the blinds and then we called someone's else raise that acts after us. In this case we cannot have a strong hand, because in the first place we wouldn't just call with a big hand. Sure it could be medium hand like KJ not suited, but still our opponent could have AK or similar. By calling blinds from early position we're representing a very weak hand, and at the best we could have a small pocket pair.



Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

you forgot about being on blinds? pretty sure that would explain it



larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

Can't this really be boiled down to a general advice about leading out with your value hands instead of trying to be clever and fancy checking, just hoping that someone else will bet for you enabling you to come over the top with a reraise?

I almost never use the check-raise myself, so can whole-heartedly agree with this advice. Checking can be good to induce bluffs, but if you actually got your opponent to bluff, does a check-raise then really accomplish anything? In my opinion usually not, since it will just fold out the bluff, so I completely agree, that it is a very overvalued and overused play.



Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

If you're playing HU against a hyper aggressive player who's more likely to continue with air than fold to a check-raise, then I think it could accomplish a lot. Especially if you have some history of playing into this opponent and he knows it, you can make it look like a leveling game but really you have the goods.

I agree though: it's way overused and generally accomplishes very little.



Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

I don't think players use this strategy enough. I love to bet-out into the pre-flop raiser when I hit a set.

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Small Ball Poker

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

"Small Ball" is an advanced style of play that was initially coined by Dan Harrington in his *Harrington on Hold'em* (<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1880685337?ie=UTF8&tag=thpoba-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1880685337>) series of tournament strategy books.

However, this term and style of play later gained more recognition through strategy articles and videos by [Daniel Negreanu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Negreanu) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Negreanu). .

In fairness though, it's hard to give either Harrington (or Negreanu) full credit for this style of play. It's likely that this style had been employed by many professional poker players before them, but they just hadn't named it.

What is small ball poker?

Essentially, *small ball poker* involves playing a wider range of starting hands more aggressively, but only using small bets and raises to save you from losing too much money when certain plays do not work out.

Small ball poker is intended to primarily be used in MTTs as opposed to SNGs and cash games.

Small ball poker video.

Small Ball Poker with Daniel Negreanu 1/3



This video gives a basic overview of the small ball playing style.

It's impressively cheesy with some comically bad acting thrown in to the mix, but all the essential information for basic small ball strategy is there.

Apparently, 57 suited is a hand good for flopping full houses. Also, 1:54 - 1:58 is fairly amusing.

Why can small ball poker be effective?

- Loose table image.
- Opponents will call more often with weaker hands.
- You can exploit this when you hold a strong hand.

This style of play can be very effective because you create a very loose table image (<http://www.psychology/table-image/>) for yourself. Therefore you should receive more action from opponents when you do have a big hand because they will perceive you as a loose aggressive player, and may feel that you are more likely to try and bluff them out of the pot.

If you play small ball poker correctly, in the long run the amount you win from opponents when they call you down with sub standard hands should outweigh the amount you lose from making consistent raises and bets without a strong hand. This is a reason why it is important to make small raises and bets instead of large, stronger bets.

Small ball poker benefits from players who call you down with mediocre hands because they do not give you credit for holding a strong hand.

The image you project onto the other players at the table is key to the success of the small ball concept. As already mentioned, the reason why this [style of play \(../general/playing-styles/\)](#) is so effective is because your opponents will be more willing to call you down with marginal hands because of the way you have played in previous hands. So essentially, the small bets and raises that you may win or lose pots with in earlier hands are just setting you up for bigger hands later on in the session.

Opponents must be aware of your style of play for small ball poker to work.

It is important to remember that you are relying on your opponents to be aware of the way you are playing for small ball poker to be successful. If your opponents are not thinking about how you are playing, then you are going to have limited success.

If other players at the table are loose and are going to call your bets regardless of what table image you project, then you are better off playing a tight-aggressive style rather than small ball poker.

How to play small ball poker.

Small ball poker tips.

- Play as many hands in position as you can.
 - Learn how to play post-flop well.
 - Use good starting hand selection.
 - When playing weaker starting hands, play hands that have drawing potential (can make flushes or straights).
-

When playing small ball, you have to try and take advantage of [position \(../basic/position/\)](#) as frequently as possible. It is not going to be an effective style of playing if you are raising 2.5BB from under the gun or in any early position on a regular basis. The chances are that you are going to get a caller and be out of position in a pot with a hand that is probably marginal.

Save the raises for when you are closer to the button and there are little to no players already in the pot. Playing small ball poker relies on you being able to play well post flop because you are entering so many pots and allowing other players to do so cheaply. It is going to be far easier to outplay your opponents if there are less of them in the hand and if you have position.

You have to be an experienced player to be able to profitably employ the small ball playing style.

Small ball poker starting hand selection.

Another key point to playing successful small ball poker is starting hand selection (<http://pokerstrategy.com/basic/starting-hand-selection/>). If you are going to enter a pot by raising with a less than a premium hand, then it is important that the hand you raise with has some kind of potential.

Although we are raising with less than premium hands, it does not necessarily mean that we are trying to take down the blinds alone on every hand. There is a high chance that we are going to get a caller because our raises are relatively small, and so we are going to need a hand that we can work with after the flop.

The type of hands we want to play when playing small ball are connecting cards and suited cards that have some potential if/when we go to the flop.

By playing hands with *potential* it gives us some room to make plays and possibly make very strong hands on or after the flop. However, you should avoid getting too involved in hands when you hit middle or top pair. The chances are you will have a weak kicker, and as a general rule these types of pots should never become too big if you are going to win them.

Where is small ball poker most effective?

Small ball poker is going to be most effective in situations where the blinds are small relative to the size of the stacks. Therefore, this will be at the start of MTTs and SNGs and in cash games.

Small ball would be most suited to cash games and the early stages of tournaments.

Toward the end of tournaments the blinds will usually be too great in relation to the size of the stacks (<http://pokerstrategy.com/concepts/stack-sizes/>) to play small ball, as there will be little room post flop plays. The last thing you want to be doing in a tournament is committing a quarter or more of your stack into a pot with a marginal hand before the flop.

Small ball would therefore be most effective at the start of tournaments. It would be fine to use in MTTs, but with SNGs there is a problem in that the structure is usually quite fast, and the period to play effective small ball will not last for long.

In addition, the image you create will become almost worthless near the end of the SNG tournament because the blinds will become so great that opponents will be forced into folding or calling regardless of what your image might have been at the start of the tournament.

Like the idea of getting coached by Daniel Negreanu? Check out his [PokerVT](http://poker-vt.com) (<http://poker-vt.com>) training site.

What do I think of small ball poker?

Small ball poker is basically playing LAG but making smaller bet amounts.

Raising small amounts from any position at the table with marginal hands in an attempt to recreate the "small ball" style of play is not going to be a successful strategy in my opinion. In spite of this, there are actually a few genuinely effective elements to the small ball style though, such as:

- Using your position to your advantage. Basically not just playing your cards but playing your position.
- Playing more aggressively to help you "buy position".

I believe that amateur players who attempt to emulate small ball poker will get themselves in to tricky situations. You definitely need a good post-flop game to be able to play small ball poker (or should I just say LAG?).

As your game improves you may develop in to more of a loose-aggressive style of play, but that will not necessarily be "small ball poker". I believe that Daniel Negreanu may be trying a little too hard to coin a super-awesome new playing style that will take over the world of poker, but at the end of the day it's just a weak variation on an existing one.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy](http://poker-vt.com) (<http://poker-vt.com>).

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Because you play more pots it actually helps to improve your post flop game. Also because you play more hands it's easier to throw away big starting hands to aggressive play post flop with the knowledge that there are plenty of other hands that you will be playing to win pots.

L

larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

I completely agree, that small ball poker is just another word for LAG. I have watched many episodes of High Stakes Poker, where Daniel Negreanu has participated in most, and really he does not have a playing style, that differ in any significant way from that of most other top players. He is perhaps bluffing a bit more than most, but actually sometimes to a degree, where it fires back on him and make him look - dare I say it? - like a bit on an agro-fish sometimes.

I also agree, that this playing style - and LAG in general - is only suitable for deep stack games and against better players, who actually think about your playing style and adjust to it. In shorter stacked games and against players, how are loose themselves, because they are fishy, you are definitely better off staying more tight and playing only the strongest starting hands in a much more "ABC" way.

T

TakenItEasy

0 points · 9 years ago

Small Ball is definitely distinguishable from the LAG style although it has many similarities. In fact one of it's virtues is that many fail to distinguish the two so that small balers often get paid off when they make a monster hand with a similar frequency to the LAG style but paying much less for the chances to get there.

This is by no means the limit to the aspects of playing small ball but that's a much larger discussion than presented here.

This style did indeed exist well before the Small Ball style was coined. I actually thought it was DN that coined the phrase based on something he said, but I'll defer to the author.

Pre-poker boom I've heard it referred to as the "chipper" style, sometime in the late 90s I think but can't be certain of this date.

Back then, it was considered to be one of three standard styles called "Tight", "Aggressive", and "Chipper" which clearly translates to TAG, LAG, and Small Ball today.

Also these three styles were considered to have a ro-sham-bo relationship in terms of relative advantages. TAG > Small Ball > LAG > TAG which I still believe is true today.

This aspect of the game has been widely overlooked, perhaps in part due to the hopes of many trying to find a GTO or Game Theory Optimal style that no other style can exploit. Since it was found to exist with extreme short stacks commonly known as push boting, the chase to find a more complete version of GTO has perhaps distracted those game theory players from finding other relationships such as the one I expressed above.

Therefore if a ro-sham-bo relationship was considered as fundamental to poker, it would be in opposition to the existence of GTO.

I claim no credit to this theory but I believe was the common thinking of the day among many pros.

With the poker boom, so many passive calling stations pervaded the game the only style that made any sense to exploit these players was TAG and the other two styles seemed to completely disappear from all but the highest levels.

Once TAG was established, The best style to exploit TAG was LAG which was then considered to be the latest "newly discovered" style. Then of course small ball would be the best response to defeat LAG and was the last style to re-emerge in the game.

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Poker Table Analysis

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

As soon as you sit down at the poker table, you should be immediately evaluating how each of your opponents play. **The more information you have on your opponents, the better the plays you can make against them.** You can obtain information about how your opponents play by watching the hands you are not involved in.



(See the article on [putting poker players on a hand \(/putting-players-on-hands/\)](#) for more information.)

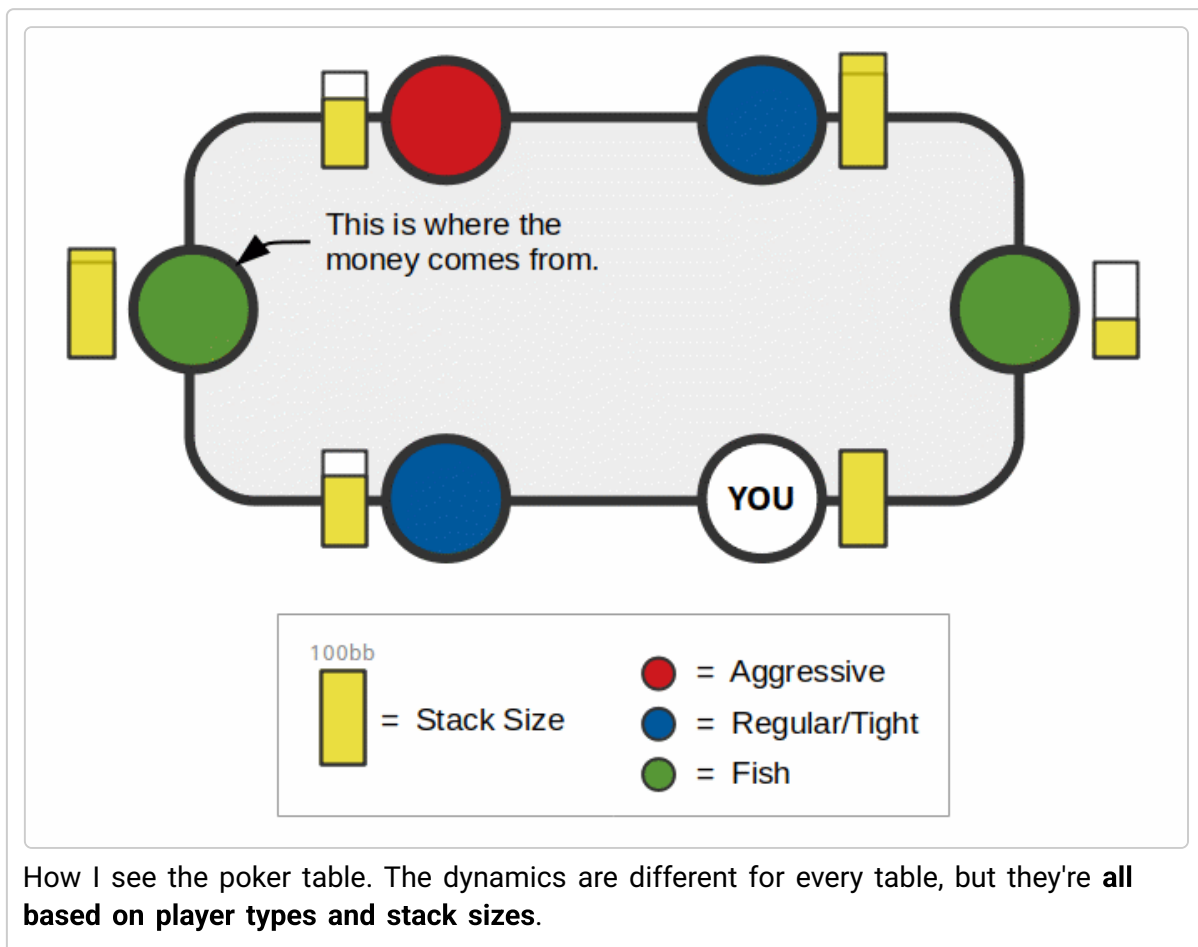
But what are you looking for when you sit down at a table?

Table Dynamics

After playing a few hands you should be able to get a feel for the *dynamics* at the table. This general table dynamic is based on two things:

1. [Player Types \(/strategy/general/playing-styles/\)](#).
2. [Stack Sizes \(/strategy/concepts/stack-sizes/\)](#).

The interplay of these two variables influences all of the action at the table. How you play each hand is depends on your position within this dynamic.



Ideally you're looking for **fish** with big stacks — these are your targets. You should **aim play in a way that allows you to get involved in hands with fishy players**, whilst simultaneously avoiding dangerous situations with the **aggressive** players.

In general you don't want to be sitting down at a table full of aggressive players. You want to be able to see spots where you can easily find yourself winning money.

“ *Basically, you never play a table where everyone is aggressive.*

— Patrik Antonius (<https://youtu.be/IpMwa48aDMI?t=37>).

If you can't see opportunities for making money at the table, find another one to sit at.

Every table is different, and that's why poker is interesting. You'll get better at feeling out the dynamics with the more hands you play and the more tables you play at. Poker tables are like books... after the first few pages you should know whether or not you want to keep on reading.

General tips.

Here are few extra things you can look for whilst you're waiting for the big blind:

1. Take a look at each player's stack size (</strategy/concepts/stack-sizes/>).
2. Look out for players calling the big blind and then calling a raise from another player (this is a good one).
3. Read their player username (not so great, but always an option!).
4. Watch for players who do not wait for the big blind (again, not a great indicator).

1. Stack size (</strategy/concepts/stack-sizes/>).



([images/stack-size-analysis.jpg](/images/stack-size-analysis.jpg)).

Get a feel for the numbers on the table with a quick scan of the stack sizes (including their positions).

In cash games (</rooms/games/cash/>), you can quickly spot who the potential solid players and potential weak players are by looking at the size of their stack. Each cash game has a maximum buy-in that is typically 100 times the big blind. Good players will either be at this maximum buy in or above it.

I'm more aware of the players with 100bb+ stacks, but it's only a starting point.

Why? Because if you know you have an edge over other players, you can maximize this edge by ensuring that you are always in a position to get as many chips in to the middle in profitable situations. If I've only got 80bb in my stack and I see an awful player with 100bb, all I can see is

20bb of their money waiting to be missed out on.

Conversely, the likely weak/poor players will have a stack size significantly below the maximum buy in. This is because the recreational players are comfortable with letting their stack diminish as play progresses, whereas a winning player will want to reload to the maximum to give themselves the best opportunities to make maximum profit on each hand.

Note: *Big stack = strong* does not always work. A bad player may have some short-term luck and push their stack above the maximum buy-in. ***Small stack = weak*** however is more reliable.

2. *Players calling the blind, then calling a raise.*

If you see a player calling the initial big blind, and then calling again after a player behind them has raised, you can assume that they are not an experienced player. This is for the reason that if you have a hand that is worth calling a raise with, it is far better to be the raiser rather than calling another player's raise.

In addition, if a player [limps in \(/videos/splitsuit/limped-pots/\)](/videos/splitsuit/limped-pots/), you can assume that they have a marginal hand or they are slowplaying a monster. Therefore as someone raises behind them, if they call you can assume that they are calling a raise with a marginal hand because a player with a monster starting hand will usually re-raise. This fact that they are calling to see flops with marginal hands is enough information to assume that the player is weak and inexperienced in playing winning poker.

On the other hand, they may still have a strong starting hand even if they do call both the big blind and then the raise, but are just passive players. However, a solid player will not be this passive so you can safely assume again that they are not that great to be simply calling with strong [starting hands \(/../basic/starting-hand-selection/\)](/../basic/starting-hand-selection/).

Unless a player holds a [small pocket pair \(/../hands/pockets/small/\)](/../hands/pockets/small/) and is set mining, calling the blind then calling a raise is a poor play that you would not expect an experienced player to make.

3. *Player name/alias (unreliable).*

Don't make emotional judgments base on other players' usernames. Players often pick username that [tilt \(/strategy/psychology/tilting/\)](/strategy/psychology/tilting/) amateur players. Playing with emotion loses you money, playing with logic wins you money.

The alias or name of your online opponents can also be an indication of their personality and intentions from playing the game. Many of the "sensible" players will simply use their real name or possibly a poker related name as their alias. On the other hand, the "less sensible" and recreational players may opt for the rude and almost offensive names.

Although this is far from being a solid indication of our opponents' styles of play, it can be helpful when we have little to go on in regards to what our opponents are like. We can infer that the players with 'sensible' names are more likely to be solid players whereas the players with 'less sensible' names may be playing for fun as recreational players.

4. Players not waiting for the big blind. (unreliable)

As soon as you sit down at a cash table, you are not dealt a hand until you have posted a big blind. The big blind can be posted at any time of the rotation but it is advised that you wait for the actual big blind to come to you before playing a hand.

This is to save yourself from seeing flops in a bad position ([../basic/position/](#)), with a hand that could potentially lose you a lot of money. Therefore if you notice that other new players at the table are posting the big blind before the actual big blind gets too them, you can assume that they are anxious to get into the game and play, and may not be a solid player.

Poker table analysis evaluation.

It should be stressed that the above advice on analyzing your opponents style is not always going to be concrete evidence about how your opponents play. You may come across a player with an extremely childish name and not waiting for the big blind as he sits down, but at the same time is a very strong player.

You should not rely solely on these reads to gauge the strength of your opponents, but to simply help influence your decision on how they play when you have little else to go by.

Go back to the awesome Texas Hold'em Strategy ([/strategy/](#)).

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David Doucet

0 points · 11 years ago

About "Players calling the blind, then calling a raise.", I'm now ashamed of admitting I sometimes do that. I often play at low stakes with a 200+ BB stack, which makes my focus more on trapping for big gains rather than going with the blinds, so I like to hide strong hands by simply calling. Is there any situation like that where it makes sense to make that move?

And thanks for the great articles, I'm gonna read them all!

L

larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

You sometimes see pros limping in with big hands in TV-poker, so I guess the play must have some merit after all at least as a variation. Because you rarely see pros doing it every single time. They usually mix up the way, they play.

But as with other "advanced" plays, I would question how valuable it is at low stakes tables? If you make a "standard" open raise with KK and get called by a big fish with AQ, won't he still like his hand very much on a Q high board? Will he really be that much more "scared" of an overpair, just because you raised before the flop rather than limped in and then called his raise? I would argue probably not most of the time.

Also if he is agro, he might 3-bet you with AQ, and then you can still underrep your hand by just calling his 3-bet, and at the same time get more money into the pot before the flop. Which is of course really excellent, since you have the best hand.

The only reason I can see for limping, is if the other players are weak-tight and fold a lot to your open raises but almost never 3-bet. In that situation it might make sense to turn a wide range of hands into semi-bluffs but just limp in with monsters like KK and AA to at least get a chance to win more than 1,5 BB with such a big hand, that we unfortunately only get a few times pr. playing session.

G

Greg

0 points · 11 years ago

You've got the right idea when playing with your 200+ effective stacks. Hitting top pair with stacks like this isn't as great a situation as top pair with <100bb stacks. You ideally want to be able to have the hand locked down with the subtle nuts.

What sort of hands are you calling to trap with? Do you think that your opponents are more likely to put their entire stack in the pot because of this slight preflop deception? Are they smart enough to be paying attention to this detail in the first place?

I'd certainly say that this kind of approach has a lot more merit with 200bb stacks, but there are obviously a lot of factors to consider when determining whether or not this is the best option preflop.

L **larskyhnau**
0 points · 11 years ago

And then there is the really big one, although you usually need to sit at the table for at least a while to be able to identify it: Players playing too many hands. There might be a small possibility, that he is just running card hot. But if someone has participated in 15 of the first 20 pots, where you sit at the table, then it is way more likely, he is mainly looking for the excitement of playing, and that he is therefore not a very good player. And in particular that is true, if he just limped in or called in the majority of these hands.

Another thing to look for after a while is people, who bluff too much. If it is always the same player, who take "stabs" at pots, when nobody else does it, then he most likely does not have the nuts every single time, he does it. And then you should aim after calling with bluff-catchers like 3. or 4. pair or even hitting back on him with some bluff check-raises.

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Blind Stealing

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

"Blind stealing" is a term used in poker for when a player in late position raises pre-flop in an attempt to win the uncontested blinds.



This strategy is often effective because the players in the blinds will have any random two cards, meaning there is a small chance that they will have a hand worth calling a raise with, allowing you to take their blinds.

In addition to this, the players in the blinds will be first to act against you if they do call, so they should know that they need a better than mediocre hand to pay to see a flop.

In terms of *poker strategy for blind stealing*, you will find yourself in two different positions during a game.

1. You will have the opportunity to steal other players' blinds.
2. Other players will be trying to steal your blinds.

How should you play in both of these situations? The recommended plays are determined by whether you are playing in a tournament or a [cash game \(/rooms/games/cash/\)](#).

Blind Stealing Strategy

Tournaments.

Blind stealing is most effective in tournaments (for example; [sit n go's \(/../tournament/basic-sng/\)](#) and [multi table tournaments \(/../tournament/basic-mtt/\)](#)). If you are in need of chips, you sometimes cannot afford to wait for a premium hand. Therefore blind stealing offers a great opportunity for you to accumulate chips.

However, at the start of these tournaments where the blinds are very low in relation to your stack size, **blind stealing** becomes less beneficial. This is because the blinds are too small to be worth fighting for, and opponents are more likely to call raises because the blinds are so small in relation to their stack.

Cash games.

For a complete strategy video guide to blind stealing in cash games, watch SplitSuit's [Stealing \(../../videos/splitsuit/stealing/\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=.../videos/splitsuit/stealing/) video.

In cash games the blinds are usually very small in relation to your stack. This means that from a purely money making point of view, blind stealing is not going to be very profitable. In general you want to stick to playing good hands and avoid risking money with a weak hand.

However, blind stealing in cash games should be based on whether you feel you can easily out-play your opponents on later betting rounds if they call, and take the extra money they put into the pot. This play is aided by the fact that you will be last to act on each round, giving you a much better opportunity to win. But be sure not to use this play on every orbit because the players in the blinds will become wise to your game.

I would not recommend stealing blinds in cash games on a regular basis as a method of winning more money.

Defending against players trying to steal your blinds.

As a general rule, you should not actively attempt to protect your blinds on every round. You have to remember that you are going to be first to act against anyone who tries to steal your blind because of your poor [table position \(../../basic/position/\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=.../basic/position/), so if you call and don't hit the flop hard, what are you going to do?

- If you check, are you going to re-raise their continuation bet (which is very likely) in an attempt to re-steal the pot?
- Are you going to bluff at the pot when first to act?

In both situations you will have no idea what your opponent has and you are risking a decent amount trying to take down a "nothing pot". Information is key and without knowing anything about your opponents' hands, protecting your blinds isn't going to be profitable in the long run.

It's never going to be as easy as you might hope to defend against a player stealing your blinds. It's better to let them go rather than dig yourself in to a deeper hole by fighting back.

You should remember that **after you have posted your blind, it is no longer your money**. The money now belongs to the pot and not to you. This is the reason why many players can lose a lot of money to raises when in the blinds, as they believe that the blind is still their money and that they have to defend it. This is not the case

In certain circumstances however, you can effectively deter your opponents from stealing your blinds on future betting rounds. If you feel a player is betting in late position in an attempt to steal, a decent re-raise on your part will make them think twice about trying to steal on future rounds.

Even if your opponent does call your re-raise, the fact that you made the play you did shows that you have the capability to re-raise anyone who tries to steal your blind from late position. This play is most effective when the blinds are small in relation to your stack, as you are not risking as much of your stack and not forcing yourself to become committed to the pot.

See [Calling From The Blinds vs. A Steal \(/videos/wilcox/articles/calling-from-blinds-vs-steal/\)](/videos/wilcox/articles/calling-from-blinds-vs-steal/) for further strategy.

Stealing blinds evaluation.

Blind stealing is dependent on the size of the blinds in relation to the [effective stack sizes \(/strategy/concepts/stack-sizes/effective/\)](/strategy/concepts/stack-sizes/effective/). It becomes less effective trying to steal the blinds when they are small because you are potentially putting a lot of your stack at risk for a small pot. One of the worst things you can do in the face of a possible blind steal is call.

This means that you are putting more money into the pot, which your opponent has a good chance of taking away from you. If you are ever in doubt, simply play to the strength of your hand. Fold your weak hands and re-raise with your strong hands.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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?

Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

thanks for article and video.

G

Greg

0 points · 12 years ago

No problem!

L

larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

There must be a balance to everything, but it certainly makes sense to reduce your starting hand requirements, when you are on the button or cut-off, and everybody before you have folded their hands, because then you are effective down to a more short-handed situation, where mediocre hands like A5 or pocket 4 or KJ are must more likely to be the best starting hand.

So is it blind-stealing to raise with A5 or KJ from the button or is it a raise for value? I would argue, that it is most likely a bit of both. You wont mind picking up the blinds uncontested with such hands, so it that sence, you are trying to "steal" them. But in the event, you get called, you are still doing pretty ok most of the time, and at least you have position of the caller, when you go postflop, as well as initiative in the pot.

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Small Blind Strategy

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

[Blind leakage \(/.../videos/splitsuit/blind-leakage/\)](#) is an exceptional video by James 'SplitSuit' Sweeney that covers everything you need to know about profitable blind play (both in the [SB\(\)](#) and [BB\(\)](#)) in [Texas Hold'em cash games \(/rooms/games/cash/\)](#).

The *small blind* is a very tricky position to play from in Texas Hold'em. If you were to track your performance in each position at the table using a program such as [Poker Tracker \(/visit/poker-tracker/\)](#), you will find that the small blind is a losing position overall.



The best players in the world find it difficult to win money from the small blind, and that's just the way it is.

When **playing in the small blind** our aim is to try and reduce the amount of money we will lose, so that we can increase our overall wins from the other seats at the table.

The problem with playing in the small blind.

The fundamental reason as to why the small blind is such a difficult and losing position in the hand is due to the fact that **we are going to be first to act in every round after the flop**. Being out of [position \(/.../basic/position/\)](#) means that our opponents will get to see how we act before they do, giving them more information on the strength of our hand than we have on theirs.

This will put us at a big disadvantage throughout the hand, as any experienced player knows how important a role that position plays in poker, especially in [Texas Hold'em \(/\)](#).

Therefore we should know that when playing from the small blind, we are going to be on an uphill struggle throughout the hand. So a good small blind strategy would not embark on this struggle in the first place, and simply fold before the flop. If we do intend to get involved when in the small

blind, we will want to have a very strong starting hand to compensate for the fact that we are going to be out of position for every round after the flop.

Using starting hand selection to save money in the small blind.

By using solid [starting hand selection](http://pokerstrategy.com/basic/starting-hand-selection/) ([../basic/starting-hand-selection/](http://pokerstrategy.com/basic/starting-hand-selection/)), we can increase our chances of winning the hand despite the fact that we are out of position. Even though the small blind may be a losing seat overall, it does not mean that we will lose money on every individual hand that we play from that particular position. So don't be afraid to enter a pot if you have a strong enough hand to do so, but always remember to tighten your starting hand requirements when in the small blind.

A common small blind strategy mistake.

A big mistake when playing in the small blind is being under the notion that its worth seeing a flop for a little extra, as half of your blind is already in the pot. However, whilst having half of your blind in the pot does improve the [pot odds](http://pokerstrategy.com/mathematics/pot-odds/) ([../mathematics/pot-odds/](http://pokerstrategy.com/mathematics/pot-odds/)), you have to call, there is the possibility that you are setting yourself up for bigger losses than you might expect.

The extra half a bet that you have to call to see a flop may look innocent, but in real fact it is a very dangerous play, especially for the less experienced players. The big losses do not lie in the extra half a bet lost on every flop that we miss, but in the hands where we have half a holding, and put more money in the pot than necessary to try and find out if we are ahead.

Never feel [committed to a pot](http://pokerstrategy.com/strategy/concepts/pot-committed/) ([/strategy/concepts/pot-committed/](http://pokerstrategy.com/strategy/concepts/pot-committed/)). simply because you have paid your blind. It is not profitable to try and protect money you have put in the pot through the blinds, so play the hand like any other.

Playing in the small blind example.

Let say we are in the small blind and there have been a few limpers before us. We look down and see that were are holding K♣ 7♦. This looks like a half decent hand and so we decide to call because it's only half a blind more to see a flop.

The flop comes down 9♥ T♥ K♠ giving us top pair with a 7 kicker, not a bad hand.

Having top pair we decide to bet out around $\frac{3}{4}$ of the pot to see how the other players react. A few players fold, but an opponent in one of the later positions raises us 3 times our original bet, and the action is now back onto us.

In this situation our opponent could have a range of hands; they could have a king with a worse kicker, or a king with a better kicker. They may have two pair, a set, or even a straight or a flush draw. There are so many possibilities and we have little information on which hand he could have because we are out of position. But seeing as we have a half decent hand we decide to call.

The turn makes the board 2♣, which doesn't improve our hand and probably made little difference to our opponent's.

Because we are a little unsure about the strength of our hand we decide to check, and our opponent then comes out with a pot-size bet. Now we are still unsure if our opponent does have a better hand, or whether he is just exploiting our weakness because we checked. However, by this time a pot-size bet is quite large, so we decide to let the hand go and cut our losses.

Small blind example evaluation.

When reading through the hand above you probably recognized the situation all too well. Having a half decent hand but coming up against strength from another opponent and being out of position is all too common.

These situations are difficult to play because we have **so little information on our opponents and we can never be sure if we do have the best hand**. In the hand mentioned above, this problem could have easily been avoided by folding pre-flop, saving us a decent amount of money in the process.

The poor position in this hand has caused us a lot of problems, and it always will when you are playing from the small blind.

Although K♣ 7♦ looks like a reasonable hand, it just proves to be the type of hand that is going to cause us problems after the flop if we hit any part of it. So if we are determined to enter a pot when calling from the small blind (</videos/wilcox/articles/calling-from-blinds-vs-steal/>), we have to play cards that have potential to hit a very big hand.

By sticking with cards like suited connectors (</videos/splitsuit/suited-connectors/>) and pocket pairs, we will either hit a big hand or we won't, which saves us the trouble of deciding what to do after the flop. A marginal hand is the last thing we want to hit when out of position, so don't try and put up a battle with them and be prepared to let them go when you come up against action.

Small blind strategy evaluation.

The small blind is a very tricky position to play from, so we should try and avoid entering too many pots from this position unless we have a premium hand. Calling from the small blind will usually cause more problems than it is worth, so try and avoid doing so unless you have a hand that has some potential.

The small blind is the worst position to be in, so don't expect too much from the hand because you are always going to be at a disadvantage to yourself money in the long run if you folded every marginal hand instead of calling.

Related articles.

- [Playing Blind vs. Blind \(/videos/wilcox/articles/blind-vs-blind/\)](/videos/wilcox/articles/blind-vs-blind/).

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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K **Kim Eisler**
0 points · 11 years ago

AK in Small Blind, raise 700, BB calls, Button Calls. Flop: A 4 6. Bet bet raise. All-in. BB calls all in and turns over K4- knocks me out of tournament in about 20 minutes. Damn that little blind!

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 10 years ago

I'm confused...it sounds like you had a pair of aces and he beat you with K4?

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

Really like this website. Very useful. What about big blind strategy, though? Is there anything on this website, or anywhere else?

R **Randall Parker**
0 points · 11 years ago

I read somewhere you can break even on BB winning 1 out of 4. So try to protect it once in while. Someone please correct me where I may have misstated that theorem. You can at least limp/fold. With a strong hand open with 3BB + limpers.

L **larskyhnau**
0 points · 11 years ago

If you get a free roll from the big blinds, obviously you take it. If there is a preflop raise, the same thought process apply, as when you are in the small blind and need to decide, if you should complete or fold. The fact that you get slightly better pot odds, because you already put in 1 BB, does not count for much, so you should be quite tight as a default in that situation. Maybe you can call a bit more liberally, if its a raise from late position, since most players tend to raise a wider range of hands from late position.

But still you need to have an idea, how you are going to make money. What about the 70% of the time, you miss the flop? Are you going to donk into the raiser hoping, he will fold? And what if he calls you, and you are stuck with Q high? Do you expect to win that situation a lot, or lose it?

Or are you going to check and then fold to his flop C-bet every single time? If that is the case, then how profitable is it really to call in the first place, even with a discount? The hard truth is most likely not at all. So unless you have some pretty clear idea about how to win those head-to-head pissing matches, where neither player has hit anything, and you are out of position, then letting your BB go and winning it back by attacking, when you have position on someone else sitting in the blinds, is usually the better option.

Rather than trying to "defend" my big blind with a mediocre hand like A5, I will much rather wait, until I have position, and then attack with QT, 98suited or almost everything. Position and initiative are often at least as important as your cards, and when "defending" your blinds, you have neither.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 9 years ago

I disagree completely. Assuming I'm not facing a raise, I'll call near anything in the SB because it's only half an ante (if you assume 5 players are in in a 5 10 game, that's 5 chips to win 45).

You are right about postflop play being trickier from SB and having less implied odds from SB, but realistically I'd call it foolish not to play when pot odds are somewhere between 5-1 and 9-1 (clearly depending on the table).

If anything, these marginal hands allow for deceptive hands like a two pair (of full house).

The easy and profitable play is to check regardless of your holding (short of pocket Q's+ or Two Pair+) and assume play as the button.

That said, for all beginners out there, although I'd still limp in, the best advice for those that don't understand poker concepts well is to simply play very, very tight and limp in with blinds. IF you do that, no matter how bad you are, you won't lose too much money.

L

larskyhnau

0 points · 8 years ago

Trips are very obvious for everyone to see, and if you hit trips with your high card, you have kicker issues with a hand like K7 or A5. So really you are mainly looking to hit two pair with these kind of hands. And even when that happen, you are still not home free. Say the flop comes J, 7, 2 and the player on the button put in a 1/3 pot sized bet. Here you will probably talk yourself into calling because you think that:

1. He could just be using his position to try and take the pot away cheaply, so there is at least some bluffs in his range
2. Even if he have a better pair, you still have 5 outs to outdraw him, because he is most likely not playing a 7 this way

Turn comes a K, you check to induce, and he bet again, this time a pot sized bet. You are now very happy, because you just improved to 2 pair, so you call. Same thing happen on the river, you call again. And you end up losing a big pot to his KJ. This is actually totally standard and a big reason to stay away from hands with janky kickers in multiway pots.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

I don't mind being the blind in early position as I can simply check after the flop as a normal course (regardless of strength) and then, unless The next player checks, I have assumed the button position (i get to see what everybody else does.) including the button.If you do it quite a bit the other players don't know how to read you.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

while thats true u can assume position, u were still first to act and will be first next time when it might matter more. also everyone sees you check means you either missed or slow playing a big hand which depending on the flop can be read sometimes.

L

larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

XX

?

Anonymous

0 points · 8 years ago

Hi just one question here where we play we apply the check rule ex player A check player B has option either check bet or raise but can't fold if player fold when facing a check from previous player player B wins 2 hand penalty

My questions is what if the small blind first to speak fold his hand should he have a penalty

?

Anonymous

0 points · 7 years ago

Wtf?

?

Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

What about checking blind with a marginal hand? Sure they can come out strong but then you only lose half a BB. It's just another way of pushing the position but I think the KEY is that you should only play premium hands if you're gonna call on SB.

If you are getting good odds to call in the small blind then mathematically you are doing okay, the trick is you have to levy those odds to only play great flops and not stuff you'd normally play at the back end of position. It's okay to call SB if you have the discipline to play it well in my opinion. (Including K7off if you're very good at laying down hands)

?

Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

Thanks for the great article I am trying to tighten up my SB play after reading. Is always tempting (I play micro stakes but thats no excuse) to limp in with all sorts from there. When I was catching something like 2 low pair it felt like a bonus and I would call or bet too much, though I was often easily dominated (if that is the right expression). Was/still is a bit of a leak there.

G

Greg

0 points · 12 years ago

Yeah, limping feels like one of those "harmless" things, but it's actually a leak in most cases.

One of the biggest problems is that it gets you in to sticky situations, all because you're out of position with a mediocre hand at best. You often end up losing more postflop because of the awkward situations you find yourself in than the loose limps alone.

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Loose Table Strategy

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

Playing poker at a **loose table** can be a very profitable experience. However without the correct adjustments to many areas of your strategy it can also be dangerous – introducing high variance ([../other/variance/](#)) into the game.

**LOOSE
table**

This article looks at the different types of *loose table in No-Limit Texas Holdem* and discusses the important adjustments required in order to win at these tables. We start by noting that not all loose tables are the same. The main distinctions are the playing styles ([../general/playing-styles/](#)), between loose / passive tables and loose / aggressive tables.

I will show you how to quickly distinguish each from the statistics available in the lobby of most online poker rooms. Along with the adjustments in starting hand selection ([../basic/starting-hand-selection/](#)), and the factors affecting pre-flop ([../hand-guide/preflop/](#)), decisions are then covered. Finally I look at post flop play and the effect of your table image ([../psychology/table-image/](#)) on your strategy for **winning at loose tables**.

What is a loose poker table?

The term "loose" in poker refers to players who are willing to play a wide number of hands before the flop – the more hands played the "looser" the player. If several loose players get together a table can form where most pots are played multi-way, at least in the early stages. Here is where we need to make a distinction based on the passive or aggressive nature of the players at the table.

At a loose / passive table many players will call or limp ([/videos/splitsuit/limped-pots/](#)), with a wide range of holdings before the flop – creating small pots with many players still involved. At a loose / aggressive table players are more likely to raise and re-raise before the flop, creating large pots with a moderate amount of players involved.

Loose aggressive tables can easily be the most profitable tables to play at if you use the correct strategy.

These 2 types of loose table require different strategies in order to win. The important factor is knowing how to tell what kind of table you are joining before sitting down.

Using lobby figures to identify loose poker tables.

Statistics available in poker site lobbies usually show two key numbers. These are the number of players seeing each flop, and the average size of each pot. Loose tables will have anywhere between 40% and 60% of players per flop. Aggressive tables will have a much larger average pot size than the passive tables.

Strategy for playing at loose poker tables.

Strategy for playing at loose poker tables can be split up in to two sections based on the type of loose players who you are up against.

1. Playing at a loose / passive table.
2. Playing at a loose / aggressive table.

Loose / passive table strategy.

Strategy adjustments for loose passive tables often depend on the willingness of individual opponents to call large raises before the flop. There will usually be a gap between the hands that opponents are willing to limp and those that they will call a raise with. By their very nature passive opponents are more likely to call raises than re-raise you – so the first point is to tread carefully when you are called.

At a passive table the chances of being re-raised before the flop are smaller than at aggressive tables. This means it is possible to limp with more hands that have high implied odds ([../mathematics/implied-odds/](http://mathematics/implied-odds/)), value such as small pairs ([../hands/pockets/small/](http://hands/pockets/small/)), and suited connectors ([/videos/splitsuit/suited-connectors/](http://videos/splitsuit/suited-connectors/)). These types of hands play well in multi-way pots.

After you flop a monster hand ([/videos/splitsuit/flopped-monsters/](http://videos/splitsuit/flopped-monsters/)), be careful not to blow your passive opponents out of the pot with big raises. Unless the board is particularly draw-heavy you should instead pick a bet size (see bet sizing ([/strategy/basic/bet-sizing/](http://strategy/basic/bet-sizing/))) that is likely to be

called – building the pot gradually so as to be paid the maximum.

The main problem with playing at passive tables is that it is slightly harder to build big pots.

Playing premium pairs at a passive table should usually involve raising to thin the field. Too small a raise can easily induce several of your loose opponents to enter the pot behind you with speculative holdings. This can be a disaster for a pair of aces if a dangerous flop comes. The ideal strategy to win at a loose / passive table is to become tight and aggressive – yet limp in with those hands with high implied-odds value as the situation warrants.

Loose / aggressive table strategy.

Loose / aggressive tables play completely differently. Here the only time you will be able to play small pair or suited connector type hands is when you close the betting – that is to say you are the last person to call a raise before the flop comes. In early position these hands should be folded as there is too much danger of a raise and a re-raise behind you.

Premium pairs can be played strongly at a loose / aggressive table, though for different reasons compared to the loose / passive example. Here you are looking to get a large amount of money into the pot before the flop, preferably against a single opponent. The higher chance of a re-raise (or even a 4th raise all-in) makes playing these hands positively a profitable move.

Your strategy after the flop will also depend on the aggressiveness of your loose table. Loose passive players will often call with draws, sometimes as little as a gut-shot straight. Betting enough with a made hand to make their draws unprofitable by giving them poor pot odds ([../mathematics/pot-odds/](http://mathematics/pot-odds/)). will win money over time.

Observing that a loose / passive player only ever bets out when they made their draw can win you even more – by allowing you to get away from a 2nd best hand as the situation requires. At a loose passive table you will get many free cards to make your own drawing hands, take them – a bet is often too likely to be called to function as a semi-bluff ([../plays/semi-bluff/](http://plays/semi-bluff/)).

With a drawing hand ([../hands/drawing/](http://hands/drawing/)) after the flop at a loose / aggressive table you will have less chance to take a free card. Opponents are likely to bet whether they hit the flop or not. Here a bet, particularly in position may be your best strategy. Even an aggressive ([../aggression/](http://aggression/)) opponent is likely to check to you after the turn – in which case you can take a free river card to try and complete your draw if required.

Table image at loose tables.

Finally, your own [table image](http://.../psychology/table-image/) (<http://.../psychology/table-image/>) and betting style will affect your strategy when playing at a loose table. If you have been playing loose poker yourself then resist the temptation to suddenly check when you hit a monster hand.

There are 2 reasons for this, firstly observant opponents may suspect something is amiss – since you did not bet when you usually do. Secondly, you have missed a chance to get some more money into the pot, and so increase the size of bets on future betting rounds.

Loose table strategy evaluation.

To summarize, winning at a loose table involves adjusting your strategy depending on whether the players are loose / passive or loose / aggressive. Hands are played differently both before and after the flop depending on the nature of your loose opponents. Your [position at the table](http://.../basic/position/) (<http://.../basic/position/>) and your table image are other factors that also affect your strategy in winning at loose tables.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy](http://.../strategy/) ([/strategy/](http://.../strategy/)).

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baluba mario

0 points · 10 years ago

thx

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Home ► Strategy ► General ► Short Stack ►

Short Stack Poker Strategy

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

For a guide to *beating* short stack poker players, check out the "[Crushing Shortstackers](#)" [concept video \(/../../videos/splitsuit/crushing-shortstackers/\)](#).

There are always going to be times in your poker career where you will find yourself as the **short stack** at the table and probably having a smaller stack than the rest of your opponents.

It may be because you are in the middle of a tournament and had a bad run of cards, or because you simply enjoy to buy in to cash games with a short stack.



But for whatever reason you are playing with a relatively small amount of chips, it is good to be able to understand and employ a good *short stack strategy*.

What is a short stack in no limit Texas Hold'em?

The typical short stack in any cash game or tournament will have 40 Big Blinds or less.

However, there are varying degrees of short stack poker as a 10BB stack will require a slightly different strategy than a [40BB stack \(/videos/splitsuit/playing-against-cappers/\)](#), and it is important to be aware of these differences.

You may have noticed that the term 'short stack' is determined by the size of your stack relative to the blinds, and not relative to the [stack sizes \(/strategy/concepts/stack-sizes/\)](#) of your opponents. Therefore even if you have 30BB and your opponents have 20BB, you are still considered to have a short stack, and so you should continue to utilize a good short stack strategy.

How to play with a short stack.

Having a short stack means that you have less room to make plays at the poker table. [Bluffs](#) ([../basic/bluffing/](#)), and advanced moves (like [float plays](#) ([../plays/float/](#))) are formed from being able to make educated checks, bets, calls and raises on each round of the hand, so **having a short stack will reduce and sometimes eliminate any room for special maneuvers by both you and your opponents.**

Furthermore, the general structure of a no limit Texas Holdem game is that the bigger bets will be made on the [turn](#) ([../hand-guide/turn/](#)), and [river](#) ([../hand-guide/river/](#)), as the [preflop](#) ([../hand-guide/preflop/](#)), and [flop](#) ([../hand-guide/flop/](#)), rounds are usually set-up rounds that build the pot and prepare the hand for action. The fact that we have a short stack means that we will **rarely be making it past the flop** in terms of betting as we will not having enough chips to continue.

With a short stack, most (or all) of the action will be taking place on the preflop and flop betting rounds.

Hands to play when short-stacked.

The fact that we have little room for movement and that our betting will cease at the flop means that we should be playing big heavy hitting hands that will make strong hands at the flop, rather than smaller hands that have 'potential'.

We should avoid hands like [suited connectors](#) ([/videos/splitsuit/suited-connectors/](#)), and [small pocket pairs](#) ([../hands/pockets/small/](#)), as these hands are profitable when we have a deep stack, as our [implied odds](#) ([../mathematics/implied-odds/](#)) are there to compensate for the likely event that we miss the flop. In general we are best entering pots with are big suited cards that can make top pair or better at the flop, although we should exercise some flexibility in [starting hand selection](#) ([../basic/starting-hand-selection/](#)) depending on the size of our short stack.

Below is a table of the hands we should be looking to play depending on our situation:

Starting hands chart.

Note: *This starting hands chart is designed for tournament games where you are pressured to make more moves as the amount of chips left in your stack decreases. This table is not designed for short stack cash game strategy where you have the option of reloading again and again.*

40BB or less.

- AA
- KK
- QQ
- AKs
- AQs
- JJ
- AK
- AQ
- AJs

30BB or less.

- AJ
- TT
- ATs
- KQs

20BB or less.

- AT
- KQ
- KJs
- KJ

10BB or less.

- AXs
- AX
- QJs
- QJ

As you can see, a lot of emphasis has been placed playing big cards that can make top pair or better, which will often be the best hand on the flop. As you should remember it is unlikely that we will make any more bets past the flop betting round, so we should be more than happy to be making a good pair and get our money in on the flop.

You may notice that **hands that include aces have been given a lot of weight, especially if you are a very short stack.** This is because of the fact that as a extremely short stack, it is more than likely that you will be pushing or calling an all in on the flop regardless if you have caught a piece

of it or not. Therefore if we are holding an ace, we will have a better chance of winning with a high card against an opponent in the event that they did not make a pair either.

How to play these hands.

When we are dealt any of the above cards that are within our range depending on the [effective stack sizes \(/strategy/concepts/stack-sizes/effective/\)](/strategy/concepts/stack-sizes/effective/), we should always be raising when entering the pot. It may seem like a good idea to [limp \(/videos/splitsuit/limped-pots/\)](/videos/splitsuit/limped-pots/) and try and catch a good flop for cheap, but it is more profitable to raise and build the pot for when we hit our hand, which we are more likely to do if we are holding a strong starting hand.

With a stack of 10BB or more we should be looking to raise around 3 or 4BB if we are first to enter the pot. However, if we have 10BB or less, it will not be too bad of a play to push all-in straight away, as any call from a 4BB raise will leave us completely [pot-committed \(/strategy/concepts/pot-committed/\)](/strategy/concepts/pot-committed/) anyway. With 10BB or less, you can think about using the [stop and go play \(../plays/stop-and-go/\)](/plays/stop-and-go/) also.

On the flop we are usually reduced to going all-in or folding as a short stack. **The smaller the size of our stack, the more inclined we should be to calling or pushing all-in as we are more likely to be committed to the pot.** The shorter the stack, the less the flop will matter to us. However, if we have around 30/40BB, we can be a little more selective because we will not be pot committed and have the opportunity to wait for a better spot.

The shorter your stack, the less post-flop action you are going to deal with. So it's important to have a strong hand that has a good chance of winning after all 5 community cards have been dealt.

Nevertheless, if we are pot committed and will be moving all-in regardless, it is always better to make the all-in bet rather than calling if possible. This is because by betting we are giving our opponent the opportunity to fold the best hand or a potentially winning hand, which is something that is not available to us if we are calling the all-in bet.

Short stack tips overview.

- Play simple ABC poker. Avoid attempting to bluff and just bet when you have a strong hand.
- Only enter pots with premium hands.
- Fold small pocket pairs and suited connectors as you have do not have implied odds.
- Make strong 4BB raises before the flop.
- Be prepared to move all of your stack in to the middle before or on the flop.

- Leave the table if you win a big pot (and intend on playing short-stacked).

Short stack strategy evaluation.

Good short stack strategy is all about pushing every little edge that we have. Just because we have a smaller stack, it does not mean that we have less chance of winning any individual hand, it just means we have to adapt our play a little differently to each situation.

Nevertheless, we will be facing an up hill battle if we are in a tournament as each pot we enter is more likely to involve putting our tournament life on the line. At some poker sites, the structure of the faster tournaments will mean that you will spend the majority of the game as a short stack, which is a good way to learn how to play good *short stack poker*.

We should always look for the most profitable situations and get our money in when we think we have the best of it, and we should always prepare for luck to play its part in each outcome. Playing a good, sound **short stack strategy** does not guarantee to save a tournament life or secure a double up, but it will improve your chances of coming out on top in the long run.

In cash games, you cannot expect to win every all-in, but you can still play a profitable game by picking the right situations and trying to get your money in with the best hand.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy_\(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

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?

Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

Really great and helpful article, thank you.

S

Sean

0 points · 11 years ago

yes!

J

Jack Werner

0 points · 6 years ago

color key is gone



Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

It looks like the color key is wrong. Shouldn't the shortest stacks have the highest ranked starting hands. Seems like 10bb should be blue, 20bb green, etc.



Greg

0 points · 12 years ago

Hi Ken,

The reason for shorter stacks playing weaker cards is that they no longer have room to wait for better cards before running out of chips, so hands like Ax will move up in value.

The diagram thing is meant to show the kind of hands that you should be more comfortable to risk your remaining stack with as your stack size shrinks. So at 10bb or less you should be happy to play with the cards in *red* or any of the better starting hands above them.



larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

So that would be in a tournament then? The logic does not seem to apply to cash games, where you can just make a re-buyin at your own discretion, if you lose all your chips or fall below the level, you want to play with.



Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

This is a very good website on poker. Professional design theme and good information. Keep up the good work.



Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

Why in chart don't have a hand like 99?



larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

I tend to disagree with that also. I would add 22-66 to the "10 BB or less" list, and 77-99 to the "20-30 BB" list, since when you are that shortstacked, you can play them profitably by simply shoving all in before the flop, at least at a short-handed table.

I guess Greg's reason for not including them was, that he mostly considered the "standard" way of playing, where you raise 3-4 BB before the flop. And then it makes sense. Because sitting with 6-16 BB back in the stack, 8 BB on the table and a hand like 99 on a K, 7, 5 board is not the most excellent situation to be in to say the least. In that situation you will much rather have either KJ or QJ, so you can confidently decide to either raise with the intention of stacking off, if you get called or reraised, or fold and save your remaining chips for a better situation.

B **Burn in heck**
0 points · 11 years ago

I'd rather have 99 than KJ. Am I wrong to feel this way?

A **Andrea Miller's Fake Baby**
0 points · 9 years ago

The reasoning behind the preferring KJ is because anybody that calls a large raise from the short stack is probably going to have two over cards over a pair of 9's, which gives them a 50% chance to win the pot even though they have nothing to start the hand out with. This also puts the short stack at a large disadvantage because, with 9 being a middle card and knowing that a caller will probably have two over cards on you, it would be very hard for you to call any raise on a flop where an over card comes out on the flop.

Plus, you must keep in mind that Greg's website focuses on teaching beginner players how to make post-flop decisions easy. And the scenario that I just described above puts you in a situation where you have to make a decision that's not easy at all.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 13 years ago

Awesome. Short stacked less than 10BB and went all in on a ace and doubled up. Thanks.

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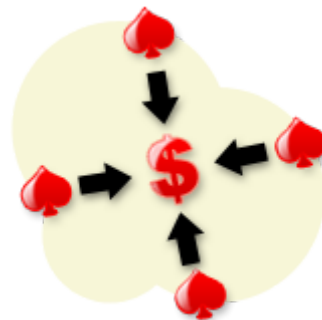
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Online Poker Multi Tabling

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

One of the biggest advantages online poker has over live poker is that you are able to play at *multiple tables* at a time. Most online poker rooms allow you to open up more than one table window and sit down and play poker at each table simultaneously.



Multi-tabling has become increasingly popular amongst regular online players, who will happily play at 2, 4, 8 or more tables. However, the majority of players will stick to multi-tabling around 2 to 4 tables at once.

The advantage of playing at multiple tables.

The main motive behind **multi-tabling** is to increase a player's win rate ([../other/winrate/](#)) per hour. If you are a consistent winner at the \$100NL table, imagine how much more you could potentially win per hour by playing 2 tables at once instead of 1. How about opening up 3 or 4 tables at once?

It all seems pretty simple, open up some more tables and you could be doubling, tripling or even quadrupling the amount you are currently winning per hour. However, there is one important factor that we have to take into consideration before assuming that things are this simple. We have to take into account that fact that our play will deteriorate for every extra table we sit down at.

How to win more money by playing multiple tables.

Every time we multi-table we can assume that the amount we expect to win every hour from each individual table will decrease. This is because our attention is now going to be divided between two or more separate tables, whereas we would be able to focus all of our concentration on one table if we were not multi-tabling.

It will be more difficult to put players on hands ([../putting-players-on-hands/](#)), because we will normally be too busy making our plays on one table to analyse the plays of our opponents on another. However, this is not necessarily such a bad thing, because **there is still a good chance that we will be making more money overall**. Here's an example:

Profit per hour when multi-tabling.

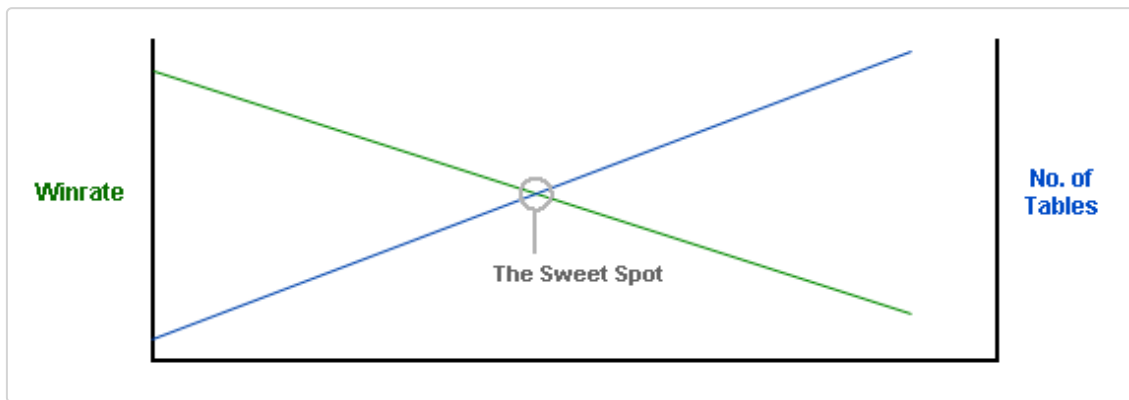
- When we play \$100NL 1 table at a time we win **\$8** per hour.
 - When we play 2 tables at a time we win **\$5 an hour on each** of the individual tables.
 - 2 tables total profit = **\$10**.
-

Therefore overall we will be making \$10 per hour multi-tabling instead of \$8, which means an **extra profit of \$2 per hour**.

Finding the optimum number of tables to play at.

The biggest problem with multi-tabling for extra profit is finding the optimum number of tables to give us the biggest win rate per hour. If we play one table at a time we will win a smaller amount than if we multi-table, but if we play at too many tables at a time then our win rate per hour on each of the tables could decrease so much that we win less than if we were playing at one table at a time.

When playing at multiple tables, you want to hit the sweet spot of playing as many tables as possible whilst keeping a good win rate per hour to produce maximum profit.



The sweet spot is where you have the most tables open whilst still maintaining a high winrate, maximizing earnings.

There is some middle ground here where the graph of our win rate per table meets the number of tables being played at to provide us with an optimum win rate. This is usually between 2 and 4 tables for the majority of online players.

When playing at multiple tables, you want to hit the sweet spot of playing as many tables as possible whilst keeping a good win rate per hour to produce maximum profit.

Best multi-tabling strategy.

The best strategy for multi-tabling is to play standard ABC poker, where you bet your strong hands and fold your weak hands. It is difficult to find enough time whilst playing multiple tables to be able to make any tricky or advanced plays. The [micro limit strategy](http://micro-limit-strategy) ([../micro-limits/](http://micro-limit-strategy)) article gives a rough overview of ABC poker.



Not much time for fancy plays here.

If you try too hard trying to analyse the [playing styles](http://playing-styles) ([../general/playing-styles/](http://playing-styles)) of each of the players at the tables you will simply become too exhausted and your ability will deteriorate even further.

Just think of your opponents as robots and play a solid style of poker against them. You are not going to be able to outsmart all of them all of the time, but if you play better than the majority of them every time you sit down at the table, then you will be a winner in the long run.

Playing at multiple tables can improve your game.

Another reason why people decide to play multiple tables at once is to reduce the boredom of having to wait between playing hands. Players can become accustomed to the fast style of Internet play and so the wait between playing hands may become frustrating after a while.

Playing at multiple tables takes a lot of the waiting out of the game, which is perfect for players who always like to be in the middle of the action.

This frustration can sometimes lead to players loosening their [starting hand requirements](#) ([../basic/starting-hand-selection/](#)), just to subdue the boredom, which is not a profitable way to play. So in some cases it can be beneficial to play more than one table at a time to prevent yourself from entering too many pots and throwing away money on hands that you should never have played in the first place.

Multi tabling evaluation.

Multi-tabling is a great option for players looking to increase their win rate per hour or are looking to liven things up with their online poker. It takes no special skill, **nor is it as difficult as you may think to play at more than one table at a time**. It is recommended however that you ease yourself in by playing 2 tables at first, and then increase the number of tables as you become more comfortable with playing at numerous tables.

You will also want to try and make sure that you set the tables up in an order across the screen that you feel comfortable with. [Poker rooms \(/rooms/\)](#) with a "mini-mode" view of the table are handy for this.

Always try and make the tables as visible as possible on the screen so that you are able to glance over all of them to keep up with the action. By following these tips and practicing you will soon be able to squeeze more from your time spent playing online poker.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](#).

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Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

this was the first article i've found that has given some type of actual strategy for multi-tabling, thanks=)

?

Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

Yet another excellent article (they all are in truth).

I have found that cascading tables and dragging one or even two to one side for special treatment (eg there is a shove monkey, loose maniac or a strong player on a particular table that needs monitoring) means I can run approx 11 tables in one go. As long as I let all the tables run their course and then rest for an hour I can do this multiple times a day if I wish.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

Thank you, I also think that multi tabling improves my game, it makes me more patient. However, the win rate/no. of tables graphic is wrong : according to this graphic, your profits are always the same no matter how many tables you play at. The win rate should decrease slower and start decreasing more after you reached the «sweet spot»

P

Philippe S

0 points · 12 years ago

Playing at multiple tables can improve your game.... so true !! I'm more patient with 2 tables and a bit lessa aggressive (I'm more of an Aggro-tard ;))

C

Christos Ganoglou

0 points · 8 years ago

in cash games live or on line the secret is only one...play solid poker and wait

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Tight Table Strategy

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#)

Tables featuring *tight players* can be a profitable venue for the poker player who is able to properly adjust their strategy accordingly.

Adjustments will need to be made in several areas to avoid tricky post flop situations. This article will look into some of the key poker strategy adjustments required to help you win at **tight tables** today.

TIGHT
table

Firstly we will look at the nature of your tight opponents, the kind of [starting hands](#) ([../basic/starting-hand-selection/](#)) that they are playing and their likely betting patterns before and after the flop. We then look at how having tight opponents affects your own starting hand selection and post-flop strategy in a variety of situations. Finally we cover how your [position](#) ([../basic/position/](#)) at the table relative to certain types of tight opponent will further affect your strategy.

What is a tight poker table?

Tight players can be defined as those playing few hands pre-flop – in some cases less than 10% of all starting hands. The characteristics of tight players mean that they will normally raise with the hands that they play – since these are generally strong. Since they have waited a long time for a quality hand in many cases, some tight players are reluctant to let go of these strong hands unless they are sure that they are beaten.

Tight players play very few hands, and tend to stick to premium hands when entering a pot.

While not all tight opponents are equal, we can make some assumptions based on their reluctance to get involved in a pot without solid values. Firstly, you will need a strong hand yourself to call a raise from a tight player (see [the gap concept \(/strategy/concepts/gap-concept/\)](#)). Secondly, we

can expect a tight player to bet out on a variety of flops – but be less likely to call a big raise when a "scare card" (for example an ace when the tight player holds a pair of queens) hits the board.

Tight poker table strategy.

The strategy adjustments required to beat these kind of opponents will affect many areas of your game. You should be less willing to call a raise from a tight player – but more willing to open a pot for a raise yourself. Raising has two key advantages. Tight players will often "tip you off" when they hold a monster by re-raising. Importantly, they will also fold regularly to any show of strength – enabling you to build your stack by picking up blinds and small pots where none of your opponents have hit a strong hand.

Tight players tend to be a little easier to read than loose players, but this does not necessarily mean that it is more profitable to play against them.

Post flop play against tight opponents involves making some assumptions about the likelihood of them hitting the flop based on the texture of the community cards.

Tight poker table hand example.

A good example is when 3 low cards come on the board – or perhaps a small pair with a medium card. The nature of your opponents means they will be heavily favoring high cards. Since there are more unpaired high card [combinations](http://../mathematics/hand-combinations/) (../mathematics/hand-combinations/) than pairs (for example A-K can be dealt 16 ways while A-A or K-K only have 6 ways each) the flop is likely to have missed the majority of their hands. Here a small bet will often take the pot uncontested from your tight opponents.

Another tight poker table hand example.

A second example involves a flop with a number of draws – for example 5♥ 6♥ 8♠. Here imagine that you called a bet from position [before the flop](http://../hand-guide/preflop/) (../hand-guide/preflop/) and your tight opponent now bets into you on this board. Being tight his most likely holding is an over-pair to the board, the bet designed to protect this hand from the numerous [drawing hands](http://../hands/drawing/) (../hands/drawing/).

Here is a situation where calling this bet, then raising heavily should a 3rd suited card or card that could have made a straight arrives on the turn. While this strategy is more risky it carries the benefit that opponents are unlikely to have bet before the flop with a drawing hand themselves.

In both examples the nature of the particular opponent should be taken into account. While many tight players will lay down their hands in the face of strength or a draw heavy board – some will not. If you run into a tight / passive opponent who will call all the way with K-K on an ace high flop then add them to your ‘buddy list’ immediately – this opponent is perfect for value betting ([./strategy/concepts/value-betting/](/strategy/concepts/value-betting/)), those times that you make a strong hand and will often pay you off with their entire stack.

Position strategy at tight tables.

Your position at the table is another important factor in winning at tight tables. This includes both your position in relation to the dealer button and your position in relation to the pre-flop raiser ([./strategy/concepts/relative-position/](/strategy/concepts/relative-position/)). From the dealer button you can open up your starting hand requirements at a tight table, from any late position you are mathematically favored to steal the blinds against opponents with small calling ranges.

Acting last after the flop will give you more information at a tight table than at a loose one. At a loose table ([./loose-table/](/loose-table/)), your opponent is likely to continuation bet as a matter of course – a raise and a re-raise ahead of you at a tight table is more likely to reflect the true strength of your opponent’s hands, allowing you to exit the pot cheaply.

Relative position at a tight table.

Calling a raise from early position at a tight table can leave you vulnerable to being sandwiched between the likely post-flop raiser and any opponents left in the hand. Since opponents are likely to play strong starting hands this can potentially lead to difficult decisions after the flop – for example your top pair may be ahead of the original raiser but an opponent behind you may have hit a monster.

Sitting immediately to the left of the preflop raiser can cause more problems than you might think.

Avoid these situations by ensuring that you will act last relative to the likely raiser after the flop. Take a look at the article on relative position ([./strategy/concepts/relative-position/](/strategy/concepts/relative-position/)) for more information on this topic.

Tight table strategy evaluation.

To summarize, adjusting to tight tables involves several interlinking factors. [Bluffing](#) ([../basic/bluffing/](#)), particularly on low or draw-heavy flops goes up in value (however you must give up quickly if called!), value betting becomes opponent dependant and is very lucrative against a tight / passive opponent. The value of position, both absolute and relative, increases as post flop bets (or checks) are more likely to reflect the true strength of your opponent's hands.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy](#) ([/strategy/](#)).

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? **Anonymous**
0 points · 11 years ago

the exerpt on the home page does not accurately tell what this post is about, i would look at the bubble and correct it, slightly confusing.

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Bet or Check Raise?

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

You are up against one opponent in a pot and you are confident that you have the best hand. Unfortunately however, you are not helped by the fact that you are first to act.

You want to get as much money into the middle, but you are not entirely sure of the best way to go about it. You could bet out straight away and hope to see them call, or you could try [check-raising \(/strategy/plays/check-raise/\)](#) them to help increase the amount of money that gets put into the pot. But what is the most profitable option over the long run?



Firstly, lets outline a few **pros and cons of betting versus check-raising**.

Check raising.

By check raising, you are opening up the opportunity to increase the amount of money that gets put in to the pot. This is because you will be raising your opponents bet, and so they will have to put more money into the middle to see the next card. The more you can get them to put in the middle, the more we can win.

The downside to check raising is that **there is always the possibility that our opponent will not bet**, and we miss out on a prime opportunity to build the pot. In addition to this, the check-raise is a very powerful move, and so by doing this we may well reduce our chances of being able to make our opponent put more money into the pot in future (and even in the current) betting rounds.

Pros:

- Ability to get more money in to the pot.

Cons:

- Shows a great deal of strength, and may force our opponent to fold.
- We will not have the opportunity to check raise if our opponent checks behind us.

Betting out first.

If we bet out first as opposed to checking with the intention of raising, we are removing the possibility of giving our opponent a free card (</strategy/plays/free-card/>) on the occasions that they would check behind us. In addition, although our bet shows strength, it does not show nearly as much strength as a check-raise, so we will still have a slight air of mystery surrounding our hand (which can prove to be very profitable).

As you can guess, the fact that we bet out first means that we restrict the amount of money that we could possibly force our opponent to put in to the pot. This is where the check-raise has the advantage over betting out.

Pros:

- Definite opportunity to get more money in to the pot.
- Our hand is more disguised than if we check raise.

Cons:

- May not be able to get as much money in to the pot.

Should you bet or check raise when first to act?

The decision of whether or not to bet or check raise all depends on the situation, as these are two viable options for building the pot. However, **the vast majority of the time it is going to be better to bet out first**, rather than to try and get tricky with a check raise. It may seem as though check-raising is the more extravagant and sophisticated play, but when you are first to act the simple bet is going to be the best choice in most cases.

If you feel that you have the best hand, you should bet out. The reason for this is that by betting out, you eliminate the risk of giving your opponent a free card whilst not giving too much information away about the strength of your hand. These two 'plus points' far outweigh the potential of getting more money into the pot by attempting check raises over the long run, so learn to save that check-raise for special occasions.

In general, you are better off betting straight out in first position as opposed to going for the check raise.

It is better to be consistently safe, rather than going for the risky big win from time to time.

When is it best to check raise?

In my opinion, the check raise is best used in [bluffing \(/strategy/basic/bluffing/\)](/strategy/basic/bluffing/) and [semi-bluffing \(/strategy/plays/semi-bluff/\)](/strategy/plays/semi-bluff/) situations rather than as a method for building the pot when you believe that you have the best hand. The true value of the check raise is its ability to display a great amount of strength about your hand, as opposed to the fact that you could potentially force your opponent to place more chips in the pot.

Against weaker players who are unaware of what the check-raise implies, it could well be effective as a pot building manoeuvre. However, against the more experienced player you are going to be shooting yourself in the foot by letting them know that you have a very strong hand.

The check raise is most useful in bluffing and semi-bluffing situations, rather than as a method to get as much money in to the pot as possible when you have the best hand.

An example of a situation in which I will decide to use the check raise is when I am confident that my hand will not be outdrawn, and my opponent will not call any of my bets. Therefore I am offering them the opportunity to bet out and try to take the hand away from me, even though I know I have the best hand. But then still, if they do decide to bet out, I will be more inclined to call and induce a bet on a further betting round rather than cut off the action by check-raising.

Bet or check raise overview.

As you should have been able to infer from this article, the check raise should be used quite sparsely, as there are often going to be more profitable plays available to you. There is no doubt that the check-raise can be effective from time to time, but there is no need to try and get fancy

with your plays when the straightforward option may well be the best (and the one that maximizes value (/strategy/concepts/value-betting/)).

Being out of position (/strategy/basic/position/) is never going to help when it comes to building a pot, so you have to do the best you can with the situation. But as a general rule... If in doubt, just bet right out.

Go back to the awesome Texas Hold'em Strategy (/strategy/).

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? **Anonymous**
0 points · 11 years ago

It's important to note that if you plan on check-raising as a semibluff/bluff, then you will need to balance your c/r range by also check-raising very strong made hands, or else observant opponents will know that you are probably on a draw and will play accordingly.

So if you check-raise your draw and it goes to showdown, try to avoid doing so for a while and check-raise the next time you flop a monster. Hopefully your opponent will assume you are on a draw and call with a dominated hand.

L **Lann**
0 points · 12 years ago

I prefer checking if I am out of position, but what about check-call. (obviously without a made hand). I find that more productive, and I can fire at the turn if my draws hit, even if I don't hit my draw, I can still c/r or lead out a semi bluff. What's your take on this?

L **larskyhnau**
0 points · 11 years ago

I think it depends both on your hand strenght, the number of players in the pot, and how often you think they will raise, if you check to them.

If you have a strong hand and the other players involved are passive types, then checking and running the risk, it just gets checked through and, god forbid it, someone maybe even outdraw you on the turn with his gut shot straight draw or a random two pair, is very poor poker in my opinion.

However if you are first to act in a multiway pot and have a mediocre hand like top pair with a 9 kicker, it might be a good idea to just check and see, how the other players react, before you decide, if you want to put more money into the pot or just give up. This is a situation, I most common find myself in, when I am getting a free play from the big blind or maybe a cheap complete from the small blind and thus is sitting out of position with weaker hands, I would normally just fold.

And if you know, there are very aggressive players behind you, who will raise almost 100% of the time, if it gets checked through to them, then checking your strong hands out of position and allowing them to make their betting mistakes, can be excellent. And like you concluded yourself, in that scenario it is usually better to just call and allow them to continue bluffing or overvaluing their hand on the turn and river, than to checkraise and blow them off their hand.

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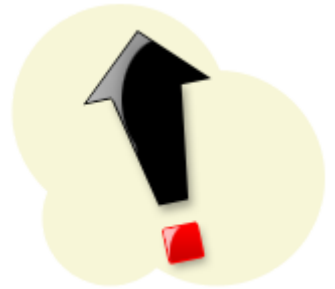


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Poker Aggression

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

Having the ability to play **aggressively** is an important attribute to have when it comes to poker, especially when playing in the game of Texas Holdem (/). Being aggressive is the opposite of being passive, where you make bets and raises more frequently instead of just checking and calling at each point during hands.



Poker aggression opens more doorways to success in poker than it does to take a passive approach the game, which is why many successful players are aggressive.

It is vital that you are able to exercise a strategic aggressive style of play, as being aggressive does not mean simply betting and raising at every opportunity.

Playing aggressive poker well involves betting and raising when you have an advantage over your opponents. This can be when you have better cards, better position, or even when you have better poker ability than them. **Aggression is only beneficial when you keep a cool head, and when you pick your spots wisely to make your bets and raises.**

Poker aggression example.

Lets say you are in a hand holding A♦ K♣ and the flop comes K♠ T♥ 7♥.

In this spot you have top pair top kicker, which is a great hand but it can be easily cracked by the turn, especially since the board is coordinated with two cards of the same suit. If your opponent bets into you, it is important to be aggressive and raise, because you want to protect your hand and you do not particularly want you opponent to see another card that could potentially improve their hand to make it better than yours.

The board is quite coordinated, and your opponent could easily be betting with a worse hand (such as a draw or a lower pair). **Your main objective is to be aggressive and bet enough to give your opponent the wrong pot odds ([../mathematics/pot-odds/](https://mathematics/pot-odds/)) to call to improve their hand**, so that you can take the pot down on the flop. This is the much better play than being passive and calling, as you leave yourself open to being out-drawn on the turn.

This is one of the greatest aspects of being aggressive, as it can save you from getting into tricky situations in the middle of a hand. There are also a number of other advantages that an aggressive approach to the game can give.

Playing aggressively helps you to win more money by giving your opponents bad odds to call with draws and by also increasing your fold equity ([../mathematics/equity/fold/](https://mathematics/equity/fold/)).

Using aggression to buy position.

"Buying position ([../basic/position/](https://basic/position/))," means that you force opponents out of the pot in the pre-flop betting round that would be acting after you later in the hand.

For example, we are two seats away from the button in a cash game holding Q♠ J♠. Everyone has folded to us except for one player who limped in. If we raise it to 4BB and the seat next to the button along with the button folds, we have just "bought position" for the rest of the hand.

This means that we will be the **last to act for the rest of the hand**, giving us an advantage over any players who call after the button. Once again aggression triumphs over passive play, because if we had just limped in ([/videos/splitsuit/limped-pots/](https://videos/splitsuit/limped-pots/)), it is more likely that the seat next to the button or button will have limped in also, which means we would not have position for the rest of the hand.

The more players you can force out of the hand that are acting after you, the better your position will be in the hand.

Using aggression to earn free cards.

If we are playing aggressively, we should be able to create an aggressive and possibly loose table image ([../psychology/table-image/](https://psychology/table-image/)), that our opponents will take note of when making their plays. By playing aggressively, our opponents are more likely to check to us, rather than betting themselves to see how we react to the hand before they respond with their play.

This is because our opponents will be **less inclined to bet mediocre hands for fear of being raised off of them**, and they will sometimes check big hands to us in hopes of inducing a bluff.

This can work to our advantage greatly if we flop a flush or a straight draw. If our opponent checks to us because of our *aggressive style* hoping to induce a bluff, we have then earned ourselves a [free card](#) ([../plays/free-card/](#)) to try and complete our draw, where normally they would have bet into us if we had not been playing aggressively.

Using aggression to get paid off.

If we are constantly playing aggressively, our opponents will start to give us less credit for our hands as the game progresses.

Our opponents will realize that we cannot constantly have the best hand every time we bet and raise, so they will start to call us down in the hopes of catching us out when [bluffing](#) ([../basic/bluffing/](#)). This works to our advantage when we then make a good hand, because our opponents may well still call us down as they no longer give us credit for having a strong hand.

Therefore, we will be making money each time an opponent calls because they do not believe us, instead of having opponents fold because they believe we have a strong hand. It is important however to try and be aware of times when our opponents may be trying to trap us, by calling with their own monster hands instead of raising and betting.

Poker aggression evaluation.

Hopefully you can see that being aggressive is the winning style of play when it comes to Texas Holdem. No matter whether you are a tight or loose player, being aggressive trumps passive play in almost every area.

Playing passively will rarely win you a decent amount of money from poker, so learn to play strong, aggressive poker.

If you watch winning players on TV or even in the online rooms, you will notice that they are exercising either a tight-aggressive or loose-aggressive style of play. Very rarely will you see a pro playing passively, as aggressive play is key to becoming a winning poker player.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy](#) ([/strategy/](#)).

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? **Anonymous**

0 points · 9 years ago

Poker aggression is used for one purpose: to break the will of your opponent. i would know, I made a very, VERY good living as a professional. You hammer and hammer and hammer on your opponent to the point where you take their soul. All the math and strategy in the world isn't going to help you when you literally lose your mind.

G **Greg**

0 points · 9 years ago

Yes! Couldn't agree more.

This is something that isn't often talked about (most likely because you can't quantify emotional attrition), but if you keep the tension on at every opportunity, eventually there will be a snap.

The snap may be a crying call or a furious bluff. Either way, they do not come out of nowhere -- it's all from an unrelenting mental pressure that is built through consistent aggression.

Aggression can go either way over the short term, but that mental snap in a big pot makes it all worth it.

Thanks for the post.

"...be calm and wait, wait for a little advantage, a little slack, then twist the rope and keep the pressure steady. All the time. That's the way you get them into shape..."

- One Flew Over the Cuckoos Nest
(quote referring to how the head nurse psychologically breaks her patients)

L **larskyhnau**

0 points · 11 years ago

I think the poker aggression example is somewhat contradicting the message presented in other articles in the strategy guide about eg. value betting.

"Your main objective is to be aggressive and bet enough to give your opponent the wrong pot odds to call to improve their hand, so that you can take the pot down on the flop."

Well not really according to those other articles. Your main objective is to be aggressive and bet for value against worse hands, that will call the bet. And in the example that would be a very wide range of hands like straightdraws, flushdraws, worse K's (KQ, KJ, KT etc) and maybe even 2. pairs like AT, QQ or JJ.

G **guest**
0 points · 10 years ago

I was thinking the exact same thing too

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 8 years ago

That all depends on the flop. On a wet board like in the example, you don't want the opponent to get a card. On a dry board, value betting is appropriate. Say that 10 of hearts was a 2 of clubs. That's the time to value bet.

L **larskyhnau**
0 points · 8 years ago

I disagree with that. On a wet board you don't want your opponent to get a FREE card, when you have a strong made hand like top pair top kicker as in this example. But that does not mean, you want your opponent to fold all drawing hands. As long as you bet large enough to give your opponent wrong pot odds, when he call with a drawing hand, he is making a mistake when calling you. So you should be happy, if he call you, and betting in that situation is definitely a value bet.

It is true, that you have some amount of reverse implied odds stacked against you in that situation. But even if you call down a standard sized 2/3 pot bet, every single time the draw completes on the turn, you still make more money, than you would have, had you just checked the flop behind.

And is it really THAT difficult to fold, when the draw completes, if your opponent suddenly change his aggression level, and you think, that he just would not do that as a bluff or at least not often enough to justify calling him? Its not like flushes in particular are that difficult to spot.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 9 years ago

Although I'll admit he didn't present perfectly, his point was to take the pot on the flop against draws.

It's a good play because if you give them the correct pot odds, you will be losing in the long run against draws.

On the other hand, if the call, they likely already have a made hand which you could likely milk with your TPTK (unless they have two pair or a set).

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Top Mistakes Made By New Live Poker Players

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#)

After some stretch playing online, many players get to grips with the rules and basic strategy and decide to venture out into *live play* and head down to their local casino or card room. Live play offers a greater poker experience where you can sit in front of other players and attempt to hold your nerve as your opponents can stare you down looking for tells.



This may sound very familiar to some of you reading this article, as **large numbers of players are frequently making the switch from online to live to involve themselves in the real live poker experience**. Online poker does a lot in the way of preparing you for live play, but there are some areas that online poker cannot recreate, which will leave you ill-equipped in a few sections of live play.

To help save yourself from making errors in your first few live sessions, I have gathered the top mistakes that new online to live players frequently make when they sit down at the live poker tables for the first time.

String betting.

“String betting” is when a player makes a bet and moves back and forth from their chip stack to the pot to complete the bet. For example, if you intend to make a \$30 bet and move three \$10 stacks into the pot **one at a time**, then this is considered to be a string bet.

This can cause problems during live play because a player that acts after you may think that when you move your \$10 stack into the pot, that it is the only bet that you are making. Then, thinking that you have completed your action, that player may go to make his play unaware that you are continuing to make your bet.

String betting is frowned upon in live play, so to avoid any confusion you should announce the size of your bet before moving your chips, or move your chips into the centre in one motion.

String betting is an easy mistake to make, so keep an eye on your betting in your first few sessions at the casino.

Reacting to cards.

When you are sat behind your computer screen, there is no one to see you smile when you are dealt [pocket aces \(../hands/pockets/aces/\)](#) or see you shake your head when you miss your draw. However, in live play your emotions are open for everyone at the table to see, so try to remain calm when looking at the cards as they come out.

For example, if you start to show disinterest in a hand then you leave yourself open to [bluffs \(../basic/bluffing/\)](#) from other players when you may have had the best hand at the time.

A good tip to avoid giving information away through your emotions is to look at your opponents as the flop is dealt and not at the cards. This way you can see how your opponent reacts and you can steady yourself before looking down at what has come out.

Acting out of turn.

Online poker software makes it impossible for you to act of turn whilst playing online, so this slip-up catches many new live players out in their first few sessions. If you act of turn, it can influence the decisions of players who were meant to act before you or after you.

You should always try and pay attention to when it is your turn to act and only make your play when the action reaches you. It is common for players with strong hands to act out of turn because they eager to make their move, so try to keep your composure when you are dealt a good hand.

Taking cards off the table.

When you are dealt a hand, you should always keep your cards on the table and not lift them up and take them into your lap. The cards should be left on the table because it eliminates the possibility of you being able to switch the cards during the hand.

Even if you genuinely make the mistake of taking the cards back to your lap, other players may become a little wary and ask that your cards be folded just to be sure that you were not cheating.

Keep your cards on the table. There is no real need to pick them up anyway (unless you are turning them over at the showdown).

Not keeping track of pot size.

In online poker, the software will display the size of the pot and the bets at every stage of each hand. This feature is not available in live play, and it is up to you to keep your eye on the size of the pot. You can ask the dealer to add up the chips in the pot, but you should ask to do this in key situations only as frequently asking the dealer to count up the chips is time consuming and will slow down play.

Nonetheless, you should try your best to keep an eye on the pot size so that you are able to quickly work out [pot odds](http://poker-mathematics.com/pot-odds/) ([../../mathematics/pot-odds/](http://poker-mathematics.com/pot-odds/)) when necessary. The less time you spend trying to figure out your odds, the more time you have to make the best decision possible when it is your turn to act.

Not tipping the dealer.

Many dealers rely on tips to make a decent wage. There is no set frequency or amount that you should tip the dealers, but it is generally good practice that you do.

Some people prefer to tip dealers at the end of their sessions, whereas others tip the dealer after every decent pot they win. In addition, some people are very generous when tipping, and some others less so. If you are unsure of how much you should tip, have a look at how much other players at the table are tipping on average and follow their lead. If you are still unsure, a very general way to tip is about 2% of every large pot you win.

Live play mistakes evaluation.

Hopefully this article has given you an insight into what you should look out for when you start to play poker in casinos and card rooms. It may also be in your interest to take a look at poker etiquette to see what is acceptable at the poker tables.

You may find that a few of the above mistakes are from players not familiarizing themselves with the rules of the game and good poker etiquette. You're not going to get shot for making any mistakes at the poker table, but it is good to have a knowledge about etiquette and how to play to keep the other players and dealers happy.

Live poker further reading.

If you play a lot of poker in B&M casinos, you should check out my friend Jonathan's [live poker](http://www.playingpokerlive.com/) (<http://www.playingpokerlive.com/>) website. He covers a lot more than I do on live poker etiquette (and how to act at a live poker table in general). There are also an impressive strategy section that contains articles with high quality tips and advice.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy](/strategy/) (</strategy/>).

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thanks that was very useful

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 9 years ago

Why is online poker even considered poker? Is there online pool or darts tournaments or cash play like there is live? No. Stick to your 10 games of solitaire on your computer if you can't handle playing real poker.



Anonymous

0 points · 8 years ago

Wow, you might just be the most retarded person there is.



larskyhnau

0 points · 8 years ago

The only difference between live and online poker is, that online you can not see your opponents emotions. This shift the online game more towards mathematically based decisions, which some players will like and others not.



Lisa Wilson

0 points · 7 years ago

Hey Greg...you have written a very good and accurate informative blog. These are the mistakes which most of the players make. Access of excitement can harm you in terms of losing your amount. It is always advisable, that one should play it with more concentration and focus instead of getting distracted.

Regards

Lisa Wilson

<http://www.heretogamble.com> (<http://www.heretogamble.com>).



Angelina Jullie

0 points · 9 years ago

The quality of your articles and contents is great..

[agen sbobet](http://sbobetinfo.net) (<http://sbobetinfo.net>).



Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

Thank you this was very useful and exactly what I was looking for.



Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

dear god / universe / allah / jewish god/ buddha,

please give me back my online poker, casinos suck and it is not my dream to grind 10 hours a day at 1 game when I could play for 2 hours a day in 10 games and then be free.

M **Mike**
0 points · 7 years ago

Keeping it cool on the poker table is the most important thing you need to remember.
Here are some tips for Casino Etiquette that can really help you- [http://www.huffingtonpost.c...](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/...)
(http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/jamie-lewis/casino-etiquette-keeping-b_9514344.html).

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 11 years ago

Dealers cannot tell you how much is in the pot / count it for you. They can however, spread the chips around so a better look is available.

G **Greg**
0 points · 11 years ago

Thanks J, I didn't actually know this.

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Home ► Strategy ► General ► Online Tells ►

Online Poker Tells

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

Relative to live poker, there are far fewer online poker tells that you can pick up on to find out whether or not your opponent is bluffing, especially in [online Texas Holdem \(/rooms/\)](#). This is for the obvious reason that you are unable to physically see who you are playing against.

Nevertheless, this can be positive for your game because you can focus on the tactical side of your game and learn how to play different situations with improved skill. However, there are still a number of **online poker tells** that you can look out for that can give away the strength of your opponent's hand.

Online tells are never going to be as solid as live tells, but they can still prove to be a little handy from time to time. However, I wouldn't recommend solely relying on them when making tough decisions.

Top online poker tells.

- Long wait and check.
- Long wait and bet/raise.
- Check/call and then bet.
- Instant bet/check.
- Player timing out.

Long wait and check.

This shows that your opponent is weak, because he wants to make you think that he is considering to make a move with his hand when really he won't be holding much at all. Consider raising when in [position \(../basic/position/\)](#), even if you don't have much of a hand yourself.

Long wait and bet/raise.

This is the opposite of what was mentioned above. This action shows strength, as your opponent wants to make you think they are deliberating a check because they have a weak hand, but in actual fact they are holding a strong hand.

If you think about it, if you are holding a monster you will not want to bet quickly and show confidence in your bet, which may scare your opponents out of the pot. So be prepared to fold a decent hand in this situation.

Check/call flop, bet small on turn.

You are in position. Your opponent checks the flop and you bet. Your opponent calls your bet, and then bets out a relatively small amount when the turn comes.

In this situation you can comfortably put your opponent on a certain basket of hands; a draw or a mediocre hand like middle pair.

Never give too much respect to a small bet. A weak bet is a weak bet, so treat it like one.

What your opponent is trying to do is stop you making a large bet on the turn that he won't like to call (because they may have a weak hand or a draw), and so is attempting to show a little strength by betting first and not having to call a bet from you. This is sometimes referred to as a 'stop bet' or a blocking bet ([../..plays/blocking-bet/](https://www.pokerstrategy.com/strategy/playing/blocking-bet/)), because your opponent is trying to stop you from putting in that big bet. So try re-raising in these situations to prevent them from improving their hand.

Instant bet/check.

Almost every site will have action tabs that you can select before the action gets to you. This means that you will act instantaneously when it is your turn. It is not a wise idea to use these buttons for the following reasons:

- When you see someone insta-check, it shows great weakness because they are so disinterested with the hand that they decide to check before the action gets to them.
- Therefore insta-betting/raising shows strength, as your opponent is happy to put more money into the pot before seeing what other players do and before the action reaches him or her.

Player timing out.

Because of how easy it is to play poker online (in ease of use terms), many players will not have their full attention on the game. They may be involved in other activities such as talking on a messenger, browsing the net or even [multi-tabling](#) ([../multi-tabling/](#)), too many tables. This means that they occasionally will not realise it is their turn and time out, and then apologize for wasting time in the chat box.

Due to their lack of focus, they will be playing basic poker – raising with good hands and checking/folding bad hands. You can be confident that your opponent won't be pulling any moves on you to win the hand. So if they bet, make sure you have a good hand to call with, or fold. If they check, try raising to win the pot. If they do call when you bet, they may be on a draw.

Online poker tells evaluation.

These are the most useful online poker tells that I have been able to pick up on in my time of playing online poker. Obviously as you can see there is not a lot that you can go on apart from the time a player takes to act in deciding what kind of hand they have. But remember that you should not just rely on little ticks and tells to find out if your opponent is bluffing.

The more you play the more you will understand the logistics of the game and be able to read people by their betting patterns. This is by far the best way to pick up on the strength of your opponent's hand.

| At the end of the day, there is no better tell than a player's betting pattern.

Other useful links.

This was just a quick and basic guide to poker tells, and only online ones at that. If you're interested in finding out about poker tells in more detail, read [Mike Caro's Book of Poker Tells](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1580420826/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=thpoba-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217153&creative=399349&creativeASIN=1580420826) (https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1580420826/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=thpoba-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217153&creative=399349&creativeASIN=1580420826). .

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy](#) ([/strategy/](#)).

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L **live result sgp**
0 points · 5 years ago

Thanks you for sharing your thoughts

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Agen Bola (<http://ligaemas.vip/>).

Bandar Bola Online (<http://ligaemas1.net/>).

Agen Togel (<http://ligaemas1.net/>).

Live Draw Result SGP (<https://keluarantogel365.com/>).

Bocoran SGP (<https://togeljitu365.club/>).

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

Nice article/tips....I completely agree with your assessment....felt somewhat smart before reading your tips (as if I was the only person in the world to contemplate or use these "tells" online) lol. I can't help but be guilty of them from time to time as well. However, sometimes I play against people who If I believe they are knowledgeable with regards to these tells & they know I am somewhat experienced, then I think it's good to use this knowledge against them by "tell bluffs". I guess it's like reverse reverse psychology, lol, is what I mean. (depending on how I feel they may think my skill level/knowledge is) does that make sense or is it wise/workable to do this under those circumstances?

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 9 years ago

This is exactly what I needed, I play online poker with fake chips (I´m under-aged)

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Home ► Strategy ► General ► Freeroll Tips ►

5 Tips For Freeroll Tournaments

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

Freeroll tournaments are very popular amongst online players who do not want to make a deposit into their poker accounts. If you play well, it is indeed very possible to start a successful poker bankroll through simply playing in freerolls



All you have to do is place in a few of these *freeroll tournaments*, build up a small sum of money and head to the cash tables.

If you invest time and effort with good [bankroll management \(../basic/bankroll-management/\)](#) skills, there is no reason why you cannot set yourself up with a decent online bankroll to play with.

Freeroll tournaments can be tricky.

Due to the popularity of freerolls, you will often find yourself sitting in a tournament with thousands of players hoping to get a slice of the prize pool to add to their own accounts.

A large number of these players will be there to see how far they can ride their luck; pushing in on any random hands without even attempting to play some "real poker". Initiating an online bankroll through freerolls can be a tedious affair, therefore I have compiled these **top 5 tips for winning money from online poker freerolls**.

Freeroll tournament tips.

1] Be prepared to accept losses.

As negative as it sounds, you really have to be prepared to lose when playing in freerolls. The best player in the world will have trouble placing well in any of these freerolls because luck plays so much more of a factor than in any other tournament. If you focus too much on expecting to win, you will only be more disappointed and frustrated when you end up getting sucked out on for all your chips.

The best formula for online freerolls is to play well, and get lucky. You can't control luck, but you can improve your chances of winning by playing lots of freeroll tournaments.

2] Play a lot of freerolls and play them well.

As mentioned above, we cannot expect to place well in all of the freerolls that we play in. By playing in more freerolls we are giving ourselves a better chance to finish in the money.

You can increase the number of freerolls available to you by signing up at a number of different poker rooms. Almost all rooms offer freerolls, and they are happy for you to sign up just to play in them. So now not only do we have to play well and be lucky, but we also have to play often.

3] Sit tight at the start.

The start of an online freeroll is always a bit of a frenzy. The luck riders will be straight into action, pushing all their chips in the middle with any two cards hoping for the quick double up at the start. This usually results in a rapid decrease in the number of players and you will find a few players sitting with monster [stack sizes \(/strategy/concepts/stack-sizes/\)](/strategy/concepts/stack-sizes/) compared to the rest of the field.

This is only natural, so don't think that you should have a large stack size like theirs to stand a chance of winning. **Just sit tight wait for the good hands**, and wait for your turn to double up. Do not be phased if you end up busting out early, just forget about it and head onto the next one, it's probably only around the corner.

4] Look out for the players sitting out.

If you look around the table at a freeroll, you should notice that some of the players are sitting out and not playing in any of the hands. This is because they have signed up for the tournament, but have not turned up to play in it. This means that their blinds will be up for grabs for anyone who decides to raise [pre-flop \(../hand-guide/preflop/\)](https://hand-guide.com/preflop/) and doesn't come up against an opponent that is actually playing in the tournament.

Keep your eye out for the players who are sitting out, so that you can raise and take their blinds when you feel that you will not come up against any resistance from an actual player. Make sure that you pick your spots carefully, and try not to get into any heavy contests with any of your opponents for these free blinds.

5] Be aware of when the dynamics change.

As already mentioned, the start of a freeroll will be a complete frenzy. Players will be dropping out at a rapid rate and it seems like you will be in the money in no time. But you should realize that this pace will not be sustained throughout the tournament, and as the numbers decrease, the skill will increase.

Great tournament players are able to quickly identify and adapt to changes in the game.

As the luck riders drop out you will be left with opponents that have more of an idea of what they are doing, and they will now have their eyes on the money positions. This means you can play more tactically, and use a few more plays that you couldn't have used at the start, because these players will now actually be able to fold their hands. So be aware of when the transition from luck to poker starts to take place, because it will be time to [change gears \(../changing-gears/\)](https://hand-guide.com/strategy/playing-freerolls/).

Freeroll tournament tips evaluation.

These tips should prove useful for when you decide to play in your next freeroll. One key point that I feel I should highlight once more is the fact that you are going to lose far more of the freerolls you play in than win. Do not be disappointed if you have a long run of losses and come close to winning but fall at the final hurdle.

Try to have as much fun as you can playing in these freerolls and one day you will end up walking away with that initial sum of money in your account. After all, what have you got to lose?

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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P **Philippe S**
0 points · 12 years ago

Great tips, I love your site !! My poker has improved 200% since I began to read it

N **nicholas turo**
0 points · 13 years ago

YES VERY GOOD TIPS INDEED !! The main problem with freerolls is simply getting to p lay in them. Most poker sites want that initial \$ 20- \$25 deposit to get you started . It's a little tricky to get by the the initial deposit. Also to maintain your sanity you have to assume your not going to place or win an entry ticket into a real money game at least 50--75% of the time. 10-20% of the time you'll be a winner. This Furgeson techniquae is not as easy as it seems .. it requires a lot of time and patience

G **Gert**
0 points · 11 years ago

But, if you are not able to get any good hands at the beginning, what you should do next? You will go down with your average stack size from \$1500. It's useless to bluff, because, donks will call you.

I **itdoesntmatter**
0 points · 6 years ago

Best thing do is play tight, and see where you can bluff. Many may disagree but I consider position to be more important than cards. Use that position to pull a bluff here and there. The big thing though is to establish yourself as a tight player to give better chance to pull off bluff. And the donks, let them go and fold hands, see who is a donk and see who plays tight, combined with position this will tell you who and when to bluff. Keep stack size semi decent till cards start dropping.

G **Gert**
0 points · 11 years ago

Not to mention, but the posts are two years old, wich means, games and players have been changed...

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Home ► Strategy ► General ► Changing Gears ►

Changing Gears In Poker

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

For those of you that drive a manual car, you will know how important it is to *change gears* depending on the type of road you are driving along. If you were to simply stick with one gear for an entire journey, you will find that you will struggle along some roads.



For example, if you decide to stay in 1st gear throughout a journey, you may be fine when you are first starting out, but as you start to get along and hit the faster stretches your car is not going to be performing as well.

This is quite similar to poker, as throughout your sessions, you should prepare to alter your play and "change gears". Your particular strategy at the start of the session may work well for a while, but at some point **it is recommended that you change gears; otherwise your performance will start to deteriorate.**

Changing gears helps you to adapt the the changing dynamics of the game.

What is changing gears in poker?

Changing gears is basically where you deviate from your standard playing style to make your game more unpredictable. If you are a tight player, you can change gears by opening up your [starting hand requirements \(/../basic/starting-hand-selection/\)](#) and start playing a more loose [style of play \(/../general/playing-styles/\)](#). Similarly, if you are a loose player you can change gears by tightening up your starting hand requirements and playing fewer hands.

However, it should be pointed out that this does not necessarily mean going from super tight one minute to ultra loose the next. The time and manner in which you change gears should depend on the particular dynamics at the table.

Changing gears can simply involve moving from a loose style of play to a tight one (and vice versa).

Why should you change gears?

There are numerous reasons as to why you should change gears, but one of the most important reasons is because your opponents will be able to work out your particular playing style, and use it against you at your expense.

If you continue to play a straightforward tight-aggressive playing style throughout a session with no sign of change, it will make it much easier for your opponents to put you on a hand (../putting-players-on-hands/). However, if you can change your play so that you are more unpredictable, you are effectively taking away the edge that your opponents have over you and placing it back onto your side.

In general, the **tight aggressive style of play is quite like the 3rd gear of a car** it may work okay throughout the majority of a journey, but it is not going to perform best in certain situations. If you can change gears and utilize the ability you have to keep your opponents guessing, you will be maximizing your potential from every session you play. 3rd gear may be fine for some, but for those looking to win more money and develop, you need to be able to change gears in the right situations.

Examples of when to change gears.

- When stack sizes change (i.e. you become shortstacked or deepstacked).
- When you reach the bubble in a tournament.
- When the dynamics of the table changes.
- When players leave the table or when new players join.
- Your play has become static and predictable.

In each of these situations above, a certain variable at the table has changed. This means that it will have an effect on the way people are playing against each other, and the way they are playing against you. Therefore you should adapt your approach to the game accordingly so that you can take advantage of the changes, or compensate for the way your opponents will now be playing against you.

When your stack size changes.

If you start out a [cash game](/rooms/games/cash/) with 100BB, you can happily employ your favoured winning style of play. However, if you win a handful of all-in encounters and find yourself with a much larger [stack size](/strategy/concepts/stack-sizes/) against opponents with equally deep stacks, you should be prepared to adapt your play.

In this situation there will be much greater [implied odds](/../mathematics/implied-odds/) at stake, and so you can afford to pay that little extra to see flops with hands like pocket pairs and other drawing hands, whereas you may previously folded because the [pot odds](/../mathematics/pot-odds/) and implied odds would not have been in your favour.

When you reach the bubble in a tournament.

Typically in a tournament, people tighten up at the bubble in an attempt to hold on and make their way into the money. This is a prime opportunity to take advantage of this tight play, and pick up some loose uncontested pots to set yourself up with a strong stack to contend for first place.

Sure, you can tighten up as well, and muddle your way into the money, but you are missing out on a prime opportunity to pick up loose pots and give yourself a much better opportunity to take first place.

Big MTT tournaments are prime examples of where the ability to change gears as the tournament progresses is vital to a winning strategy.

When the dynamics of the table changes

Sometimes in poker, the way the table is playing will start to change, as players gradually play tighter or become looser. If you can spot when the dynamics of the table is changing for whatever reason, you can capitalize on it by adapting your game accordingly. Of course you can carry on the same way you have been playing throughout the session, but again you are missing out on a great opportunity to maximize your winnings by not taking note of the changes.

When players leave the table or when new players join.

Similar to the point above, if new players are joining a table and old ones are leaving, the dynamics of the table will naturally be changing. If you play at a table for an hour or so and notice that many of the original players have left, you can't expect the dynamics of the table to be the same

as when you started. Therefore you should always be aware of potential changes especially as new players join.

Your play has become static and predictable.

As already mentioned, **one of the most important reasons to change gears is to keep your play unpredictable**. If your opponents can work out your style of play, it will make it a hell of a lot easier for them to read your hands. So make sure that you do not shoot yourself in the foot by continually playing the same style of poker; be prepared to mix it up a little when necessary.

However, this does not mean playing bad cards for the sake of it if you are a tight player, it simply means opening up your range a little to incorporate hands that a slightly looser opponent might play. Just because you are changing gears, it does not mean that you should play badly and lose money for the sake of changing gears. It is perfectly possible to adopt a winning loose style of play from your current tight style of play and vice versa.

Changing gears evaluation.

It is not a terrible thing to continuously play your regular style of play throughout a session. In fact, it's always good to be consistent and make the plays that are the most profitable at every opportunity.

However, if you are not changing gears, then you are not allowing yourself to make the most profitable plays possible. If you confine yourself to one style of play alone, you are restricting yourself from getting your hands on the extra money that comes from diversifying your play.

Some players have been brought up on the bread and butter style of ABC poker; which is all well and good. But this kind of play isn't always going to cut it in certain situations. So if you want to get the most from your sessions you should learn to change gears at the right moments, and keep your opponents on their toes (as well as to take advantage of the changing dynamics of the table). It may be a little tricky to change gears at first, but after a little practice it will be like second nature.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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Poker Playing Styles

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](/about/).

If you have read [Texas Hold'em strategy articles \(/strategy/\)](/strategy/), or overheard discussions between poker players, you may have come across certain combinations of words to describe how someone plays at the poker table.



The typical *playing styles* attributed to players are:

- Tight-Aggressive (TAG)
- Loose-Aggressive (LAG)
- Tight-Passive
- Loose-Passive

But what exactly does it mean to be Tight, Loose, Aggressive or Passive in [Texas Hold'em \(/\)](/)? And which playing style is the best?

Poker playing styles explained.

The first word - tight and loose.

The first word of each playing style describes how many hands a player is perceived to be playing, and they will either be describes as being "tight" or "loose".

- A **tight player** will play very few hands, and only play premium hands that have a good chance of winning.
- A **loose player** will play a wide variety of hands and enter numerous pots with both strong starting hands a few weaker ones.

The more hands a player enters pots with, the "looser" they are.

The second word - aggressive and passive.

The second part of each playing style describes how the particular players bet on each betting round, and this is described as being either "aggressive" or "passive".

- An **aggressive player** will frequently bet or raise and give a lot of action by making strong bets.
- A **passive player** will be more inclined to check and call, and will rarely bet out or raise an opponent's bet.

So as you can see, by combining these two sections together with the two descriptions in each, we can make 4 different playing styles to describe how many hands an opponent plays, and how they play their hands by the way they bet or check.

This sort of information can be very useful when talking about strategy, as bluffing against a Loose-Passive player who plays lots of hands and calls frequently, is not going to be as profitable as making a bluff against a Tight-Aggressive player who only plays the best hands and will only bet or raise with a strong hand.

Playing styles table.

Here is a quick table to show how you would normally describe a player combining each of the various loose, tight, passive and aggressive attributes:

	Tight	Loose
Aggressive	Tricky	Maniac
Passive	Rock	Calling Station

Check out the section starting at 24:32 of the [Common Full Ring Mistakes pt. 1 video](#) ([../../videos/splitsuit/common-mistakes-1/](#)) for an overview of how to beat each of these players types.

Which out of these 4 playing styles is the best?

To play good poker you have to be able to play aggressively, as highlighted in the article on the [importance of aggression](#) ([../general/aggression/](#)). Therefore as you can expect, the best playing style is going to be a toss-up between playing Tight-Aggressive or Loose-Aggressive.

Playing aggressively is always better than playing passively, no question about it.

Many winning players will say that Tight-Aggressive is the best way to play as you are always entering pots with great hands and you are playing them strongly to maximize your winnings. This is very true, and it is often the style of play that many developing players aspire to use correctly.

In spite of this however, it is perfectly possible to play Loose-Aggressive just as profitably or even more profitably than the Tight-Aggressive style, but this is quite difficult to master.

The Loose aggressive style can be profitable, but it is dangerous if you do not know what you are doing.

Playing Loose-Aggressive means that you are seeing a lot of flops and getting money into the pot when you are often not totally sure of how strong your hand is, so it is not something that is recommended for beginner players to try. However, the rewards can be high, as your opponents will often pay you off when you hit [monster hands \(/videos/splitsuit/flopped-monsters/\)](/videos/splitsuit/flopped-monsters/), as they will not give you credit for them because of the way you have been playing up to that point.

Passive poker is never profitable.

The passive style of play is often unprofitable, and so it is advised that anyone looking to become a winning poker player should try to bet and raise more frequently rather than just checking and calling. The reason why passive play is often unprofitable is because you are removing one of your options to win a hand.

You can either win by having the best hand, or by betting your opponent out of the pot. By playing passively, you are reduced to only ever winning when you have the best hand, which is what any old player can do.

So for the majority of players learning the game, it is recommended that you try and adopt a Tight-Aggressive style because of the fact that it is profitable and safe to play. If after you gain experience in playing solid, profitable poker, there is no reason why you shouldn't try and venture out into the realms of Loose-Aggressive play to see how it works out for you.

Veteran players like the Loose-Aggressive style because it allows them to get involved in a lot of hands and see a lot of pots, which will save them from the boredom of waiting for premium hands all the time before they see any action. However, it is far safer to stick with the trusted Tight-Aggressive play at first, rather than throwing yourself into the deep end with a complex playing style that you are unfamiliar with.

For strategy and tips on how to beat each of these different playing styles (and a couple more), watch the [Player Types concept video by SplitSuit \(../../videos/splitsuit/player-types/\)](http://www.splitsuit.com/videos/splitsuit/player-types/).

Playing styles evaluation.

In general, the playing style you adopt should be the one that allows you to play most profitably. If you feel that playing Tight-Aggressive works better for you than any other style, then there is no reason why you should consider forcing yourself to change.

Similarly, if you are a recreational player and enjoy playing passively rather than aggressively, then that is perfectly fine and you should be comfortable with the way you play. However, you should be aware that if you want to maximize your winnings, an aggressive style of play would allow you to do so rather than a passive style of play.

If I had to rank the playing styles in order of how profitable they can be, I would rank them as follows:

1. Tight-Aggressive
2. Loose-Aggressive
3. Tight-Passive
4. Loose-Passive

The top two are interchangeable, as the loose-aggressive playing style can be very profitable for some. However, the TAG style is best for newer players to the game, as LAG can be a very dangerous style if you do not know what you are doing.

For more information on playing styles, check out my friend's [poker player types \(http://www.onlinepokerlowdown.com/2011/01/18/what-type-of-poker-player-are-you/\)](http://www.onlinepokerlowdown.com/2011/01/18/what-type-of-poker-player-are-you/) article on his blog. It provides more in-depth explanations of the 4 different player types outlined above with some real-life examples.

Check out the article on [changing gears in poker \(../general/changing-gears/\)](http://www.splitsuit.com/general/changing-gears/) to find out how to profitably switch between tight-aggressive and loose-aggressive poker.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](http://www.splitsuit.com/strategy/).

Comments

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? **Anonymous**

0 points · 10 years ago

How to define player to aggressive or passive? By aggression factor or via preflop play style like VPIP:16/PFR:12 = Tight aggressive and VPIP:16/PFR:2 = Tight Passive

G

Greg

0 points · 10 years ago

Yeah I'm happy enough using the VPIP:PFR as a rough indicator.

Watching how they play postflop will give you the meat of what you need to know though, obv.

J

Josh Infiesto

0 points · 6 years ago

I kind of disagree on tight/aggressive always being more profitable than tight/passive. At the donkiest levels, you'll sometimes run into tables full of calling stations. I've played at tables where (as an experiment) I've gone all in pre-flop from UTG and watched more than half the table call. In these situations, I actually think a nit strategy is more profitable. If everyone is willing to call your raise no matter how ridiculous, then raising does basically nothing other than open you up to more variance. In these situations, I'd rather adopt a low variance strategy and let the other players punish each other/themselves (rather than try and do it myself.) I guess as a rule of thumb, I'm more likely to run passively the closer my fold equity gets to 0.

G

George Kosmath

0 points · 10 years ago

I've never played poker game but after visiting your stuff I'm interested to play it..Some of my friends also recommended it. I'll be in your touch till your next updates.

www.allabouttexasholdem.com (<http://www.allabouttexasholdem.com>)

M **MikeM**
0 points · 9 years ago

Hi,

I think the process of labelling players based on limited info, can be ok against unknowns, better than nothing.

But this process is now very dated, with all the available sources for hand histories out there.

I used to struggle along at various limits, slowly but surely gaining hundreds, and then with enough time if I was lucky, maybe a couple of thousand stats on certain villains.

But then inevitably, villains would either move up in stakes, quit, or I would move up and have to begin the process from scratch again.

As all players nowadays are much much better, due to helpful sites like this one and all the training sites and vids out there, I had genuinely thought about quitting poker altogether, but then one day I just decide to check out HHDealer, and I purchased several million hands instantly, imported them into my hem database, and Bam, tens of thousands of stats on all villains at the table!

I play a gto style, and although there are no proven opening gto ranges out there yet as the game hasn't been solved, you can certainly play an optimal, and optimally exploitative game against players of whom you have tens of thousands of hands on

You still have to do the analysis with these stats and work hard, but having all this info on villains will(trust me on this) transform you're game and propel you to become a big winner.

Anywho,

My advice is to get superboosting you're villain stats, and you wont look back. By far the best site for this, and the cheapest by far is HHDealer, just check em out.

True story.

All the best J.

L **larskyhnau**
0 points · 8 years ago

These articles are meant as an introduction to the game for new players. And as such I definitely think, this one does the job. Its not true also, that all players are now very good. There is a constant flow of new players coming into the game and then in many cases leaving again after playing a while and losing a while. Just look at some of the videos on this and similar sites. You still see villains with a VPIP:PFR of 46/4 or whatever.

L **larskyhnau**
0 points · 8 years ago

Playing styles are also highly correlated to experience. A loose passive player is almost always a beginner, since this playing style is the most easy to master. Playing tight requires discipline and patience, which beginners usually don't have. So by pure default they end up playing loose.

Playing aggressive is not possible without making bluffs, semibluffs and thin value bets at a relatively high frequency. To do this profitably requires knowledge and experience. And therefore by pure default most beginners end up playing passive.

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Micro Limit Poker Strategy

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

The *micro limits* (or micro stakes, whatever) on the Internet generally range from 1c/2c (\$2NL) to 25c/50c (\$50NL) [cash games \(/rooms/games/cash/\)](#). Due to the small amount of money at stake, you will find the action is much looser than say, at the \$1/\$2 levels.



If you browse around forums, you will find many people claiming that the **micro limits** are unbeatable. They claim that all the players rely too much on luck, and with so many players entering pots trying to hit their draws, the 'luck' they get is just too overwhelming for any decent player to be able to beat these limits.

Micro limit poker is perfectly beatable, but only if you have the correct strategy.

Let me first state that this concept -- despite having a tiny element of truth -- is far from being correct. With so many players calling with bad [pot odds \(/../mathematics/pot-odds/\)](#) for their draws and calling huge raises with half a hand, how can you not beat these levels?

There are a few key **micro limit poker tips** set out below; be sure to familiarize yourself with them before stepping into your next micro-limit game.

1] Don't try and outplay your opponents.

When you sit down at the table, you can happily think that you are the best player at that table. But being cocky in the micro limits will lead to disaster. If you try and take pots away from your opponent representing that 3 of a kind, and find that they call you down with bottom pair, you have got nobody to blame but yourself.

Remember you are playing for money and not individual pots, only get your money in with the best of it. When it comes to multiple levels of thought (../psychology/multiple-level-thinking/), in micro poker, these players are usually level 1 (or 2 at best). You only need to be playing one level above them to beat them.

2] Micro limit players love to chase.

You are expecting your opponents in the micro limits to have a low understanding of the game. So if you bet twice the size of your pot and your opponent calls, you can't rule out that they will have a flush or straight draw, as they probably will not be familiar with pot odds.

Remember that if your opponent has bad odds and calls to try and make his draw, that's a good thing for you, because you will be winning more money in the long run. Just be sure to bet a larger amount into the pot when against multiple opponents to give each of them bad odds to call.

Always make sure that you are giving any players with potential draws bad odds to call when you bet.

3] Buy in for the max, but don't be afraid to lose it.

Due to the loose action at the micros, you can be expecting players to be going and calling all-ins with all sorts of made hands and draws. If you are buying into the table with the maximum, you are giving yourself the best opportunity to make the most money.

Make sure that when you're all in that you have then best of it, that way you are going to come out on top. Just remember it's not often that you are a 100% favorite to win on the flop, so you can't win them all. If you've got the best of it, don't be afraid to put your whole buy in on the line (if you have got the bankroll).

You will win more hands than you lose if you get your money in the middle with the best of it, so buy in for the max to make sure that you are maximizing your wins.

4] Don't give your opponents tips.

After you take a horrific bad beat from an equally bad player, the first thing you will want to do is criticize their play and tell them how bad it was.

But wait, it was so bad that you should be over the moon that they called. If you are that far ahead of them with your top set on the flop, you want them to go all in with their gutshot straight. After all, you wouldn't be complaining if you won that particular hand. Keep your advice to yourself and let the player make the same bad play next time.

5] Bet your good hands, fold your bad hands.

It is pretty much basic [Texas Hold'em strategy](#) ([/strategy/](#)), but this is what works best at the micro limits. There is no need to be tricky with your play, if you make a good hand bet, and if you don't, just fold. You may be afraid to scare players out of the pot, but most of the time they will call you with absolutely any hand.

6] Beware of raising.

From my experience playing micro limit poker, players will not often raise pre flop unless they have a solid hand. The game plan for most of the players at the table is to see as many flops as possible, hit a huge hand, then bet and take as much money as they can from it.

Your opponents won't give a second thought to what you might hold; they are only playing to the strength of their own hand. This is why they call decent raises with bottom pair [on the flop](#) ([../hand-guide/flop/](#)), because they've got a pair. So if you see a player raising [pre flop](#) ([../hand-guide/preflop/](#)), and on every street then beware, they've probably got something good.

| Micro players are much happier calling than they are raising.

7] Don't bluff.

This is similar to the first point, as [bluffing](#) ([../basic/bluffing/](#)) is a way of trying to outplay your opponent. Remember that a large number of players will be seeing the flop, and so a bluff of any kind is unlikely to work. Players will be calling with any half decent hand, so just put your money in when you do make a hand, and when you don't, let it go.

8] Don't be too concerned about your image.

If you only play premium hands and bet with the best of it, don't be too worried that the other players are cottoning on to your game. Players at the micros are far too concerned about the way they play opposed to the way that you play. So don't feel pressured to change gears, as your opponents won't even notice.

You are better off focusing on playing solid ABC poker strategy than changing gears at the micro limits.

Micro limit poker strategy overview.

As you can see, **micro limit poker** is a slightly different breed of poker when compared to the other stakes. After you learn the fundamentals of the game, these games should be easy to beat if you keep your cool.

This makes it profitable to multi-table ([../multi-tabling/](#)) at least 2 tables at a time because at such low stakes you are going to be less reliant on reading your opponents plays. As long as you play ABC poker (nothing fancy) and learn the tips above, you should be on your way to beating the micros.

NOTE: You may be wondering, 'where is the truth in the statement about the players being too lucky?' (2nd paragraph from top). Well, there is a concept in poker known as 'schooling'. This is where if a player calls a bet with bad odds to make his draw, the call becomes 'less bad' as other players call the raise.

For example, if you bet the size of the pot on the turn ([../hand-guide/turn/](#)) with a made hand, and your first opponent calls with a flush draw, he is making a bad play because he is calling a 2 to 1 bet with 4 to 1 odds of making the flush. However if 3 other players behind him call, this has **changed the odds from 2:1 into 5:1**, making his call profitable. This is why you should bet more against opponents with draws when more than one opponent is in the pot.

Go back to the awesome Texas Hold'em Strategy ([/strategy/](#)).

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Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

I play from 2nl to 25nl on French sites which are a lot smaller because of law changes (French can only play against French) I see the same regulars switching and multi-ing at all the stakes, I also see really bad players playing a lot higher than they should be and I'm pretty sure they lose at 25nl if they can't do too well at 4nl. As it's such a smaller poker community out here it may one way or another be not a bad generalisation of bigger sites. Meaning it's a player's job to evaluate a table or player and adjust because you just don't know but yes there are a lot more bad players at low stakes. From what I have seen you have to play ABC tight to your A game and everything in between which is basically playing winning poker.



Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

These articles are largely irrelevant in today's NL games....at about any level above 5NL. 10NL plays as tough as 50NL did just 4 years ago. Players are more educated and don't stack off with middle pair anymore....even TPGK.

No fold'em hold'em is still around, but it just isn't as prevalent. You have to be able to adjust your play and spot tendencies in your opponents to exploit. Just playing your cards won't cut it in today's environment.

Writing articles stating otherwise is irresponsible.



Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

I definitely do better at the 50NL level than the 25NL at the site I play now. At the 25 level if I sit at a table with players I don't know, odds are half of them are going to be decent and half are going to be fish. I can't tell whether I can get away with bluffing someone or whether I should call a continuation bet. I can't just judge by who is winning and who is losing because a lot of times it's fish beating other fish. Even the good players who could understand what my betting means will often call with a pair, assuming I'm a fish. On the 50 level a lot higher percentage of the players understand what my bets represent and take them seriously, and the fish on the table stand out because they are losers or else are big winners with lucky hands.

But my bankroll isn't quite big enough to play on 50NL tables, so I can't play them exclusively. I guess I'll have to settle for playing ABC poker for now.



Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

I have won but lost more at micro games cos i dare challenge strong bets w a decent starting hand that more often than not doesn't complete ... my win rate has suffered immeasurably because of it!

I am learning that my normal solid play wins most of the time small pots, and that it's fairly rare to win big pots. So multi-tabling at least 4 at a time with a lot of patience is the name of the microgame.



Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

you guys are funny. You play micro blinds like any other blind and you do try to out play them as well. The reason people lose is they try to play straight forward and these days everyone is on 2+2 etc and they have the misconception they can't play. They can play and some are just as good as high stakes players but they aren't gamblers. Im about 18 bb over last 31 k hands. but im doing everything i would do at higher blinds. If you take out bluffing and try to just play good hands your going to lose and lose big. You have to bluff for value at all levels. This is the biggest mistake people do at lower blinds is believing that they can't bluff but reality you should bluff a lot more as they hold a wider range of hands that miss a ton of flops.



Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

I raise a looot in position, usually 6-7 big blinds and they do fold.

I bluff a looooooot on flop for value, especially in position and they do fold a lot.

On turn and river i never bluff because nobody fold on turn and river in microstakes.



Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

You CAN bluff, but the problem is you'll get (for the vast majority of the time) people that will call your bluff, not because they believe you're bluffing but because they don't look at the situation and recognize when they "should" fold. They will call with bottom pair all day, or even nothing but an "under-pair." There could be 4 to a flush on the board (let's say diamonds), and your opponent could be sitting there with 4th pair, and NO DIAMOND. Now let's pretend that you played it like you were on a draw, and obviously you hit, but they still call. They didn't call you because they didn't believe you had a diamond in your hand, they called because they had a pair. This can be a good thing for you because you can get a lot of money from them when you make a strong hand (in some situations) but the problem is that you will rarely push them out of a pot. THAT is what this article was mainly about, is that simply the majority of the time, when you're playing someone with a small bankroll playing micro stakes, the chances are VERY GOOD that their knowledge of the game is minimal, perhaps even sitting there with a chart next to them showing "what beats what." So using creative plays to take down pots that would bluff someone that "knows what's going

on" is almost pointless against a rookie. You just have to be smarter to recognize spots where they are chasing a draw and figure out what it could be and if they hit so you don't end up "donating to the donkey."

?

Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

pokerburn, no.

If you are losing at nl5 you are not good enough to play NL50. Just that simple. Play longers at 10NL

?

Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

what a load of crap at low stakes people only open with premium hands they are playing so many tabs there is no need to gamble

?

Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

Simple question deserves simple answer. Did the author of this article has ever been profitable on micro stakes game, and how long he did that before he move on next level (if he move)

G

Greg

0 points · 12 years ago

Yes. About 2 to 3 months between each level.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

Good for you Greg. I will wait to make some more money on play money, to be 100% confident that I am constantly profitable with play money for longer period of time, and then I will make deposit of \$50 and test this strategy. After all, all that I can loose is \$50.

Thanks for your answer.

S

Scott

0 points · 10 years ago

lol, "build up confidence at play tables". If anybody is reading this, please don't take up this philosophy. Look at the avg pot size, and number of players post flop of any play table. It's not uncommon to see 300 BB pots, and 60-80% post flop.

In other words, its not real poker. There's no such thing as a successful bluff. Pocket aces are getting DESTROYED by flushes, and full houses. And straight flushes and quads happen every day lol.

M **Marcus**
0 points · 7 years ago

Yes, but that just happens because you always have family pots which means there is a decent chance someone has at least trips, a straight or flush. In such an environment, aces lose a lot of their value and hands like JTs become much more valuable. Pocket aces at "low stake playtables" need to be shoved. Then pray to god that at least half of the table will fold ;-)

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

There are only a few fishes around. They get eaten fast so you will miss them.
They will not come back to do the same again.
The full-of-fish propaganda machine is a joke.

P **pokerburn**
0 points · 13 years ago

im losing also in microstakes NL5 NL10... fish get lucky in the river always. im thinking to move to NL50 with 500\$ bankroll. can i?

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

No, No, NO!! Don't do it.

The shocking truth is the games are still very fishy at the higher micro levels and the variance could kill your bank roll quickly if you have bad run. 7 buy in down-swings still happen even if you are on you A game but the deck hates you.If you are losing at NL5/NL10 you just aren't playing the level right!!You can be a fantastic player but can easily level yourself against players who just don't understand what you are representing - they only look at what they've got - the article makes this point.Accept this fact, make the right adjustments and these games are definitely beatable.#1 Play with the right Bankroll - the variance can be huge as you will definitely be getting more suckouts as more players will chase to the river - embrace the bad beats, it means you are playing right. All the author's points are bang on but he didn't stress this one enough.#2 Find the right site and the right times to play - this is up to you to put the work in. Just think when and where might the 'recreational' players be?#3 Find the right table(s) - don't play at a table with 5 other regs you've noted up, don't stick around at table where you are getting 4 callers despite the

fact you have started opening for 8x the blind once every 6 orbits. Playing AK suited 4-way is +EV long term but is guaranteed to tilt you in to bad sessions in the short term. (You are "only" a 2:1 favourite against any other player in the hand generally) Table selection is a big part part of your edge, only the fish, erm.. sorry recreational players take the 1st seat they find.#4 Keep it simple - Solid tight ABC poker is all it takes.C-betting the right flop textures against the right players is fine.Semi-bluffing your strong draws is fine.Other than that NO FANCY MOVES, NO NAKED/BIG BLUFFS there is just no need. You getting called so often when you betting for value that there is no need to bluff EVER!! Forget about balancing your range, nuts to air ratio - all that stuff, they fish just aren't paying attention. Have the humility to accept that your edge in terms of real "play" is greatly diminished at these levels. Even Ivey's or Durr's beautifully crafted bluffs would count for nothing when the fish is willing to go to showdown with 92 off two pair. The sickening reality is that the best cards are generally winning at these levels not the best plays so use your skill as the better player to know when you have the better hand.#5 Control the pot size in relation to the strength of your hand. I think viewing top pair/top kicker as the nuts is a mistake against all but the calliest players, so don't set out to stack with TPTK. Top two pair on a dry board is where I make most of my money as the fish can't wait to get it in with horrible lesser two pairs once they've hit "jackpot".#6 Keep a check on your tilt - You are exposed to some of the worst calls, sickest bad beats, most annoyingly bad short stackers and generally highest levels of idiocy you'll ever experience in a poker game playing when you play at these stakes. If you have even half a clue about playing the game well then this is going to bug the hell out of you at some stage. Don't compound the losses in a bad-beat session by tilting off a couple of extra buy ins too. Get away from the game even if it's just for 10 minutes.#7 Don't loose heart. Yes you will feel like you are playing card bingo and just playing a card catching game at times, the truth is you are at these stakes. Your edge is in having the patience to select better starting hands and wait for the better hands to come - let the game come to you, you can't force it with over aggression and fancy plays.

See you at the next stake level in 3 months.



larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

Excellent advice, almost as complete as the article itself.



Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

i am playing now an 0.1 /0.2 bb i think they are all fish i win 300 big blind in 2 hour if u want to move up u have to beat each level



Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

Pablo....I play at the 10-25 also. There are days the "fish" suck out repetadly on me. Just yesterday lost \$ 22 to 11 different suckouts! You have to be aware that not all suckouts are luck. You may be actually helping the suck-out happen. How? If your just checking or calling or slow-playing your giving the fish the chance to suck-out. NEVER Slowplay. If you've been playing 10/25 for 2 years and still can't be a winning player you have some SERIOUS leaks in your game. TRy holdem Managers Leak Buster



Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

Most of these "micro stakes" strategy guides are written by people who don't play micro stakes, and who probably never did. Sure raising with AA and getting 5 callers sounds great and all, but you really fail to realize just how often a fish will suckout on you. The bulk of your hands aren't always going to be solid overpairs. There's going to be a lot of top pair/top kicker type situations, where some fish just keeps calling you and you have no idea what he has. Then boom, he hits some random 2 pair on the river and you simply have to call his shove. Between the coolers, variance, and suckouts, there's just no profit in playing micro stakes. Half your hands are flips, the other half are 90% favorites (still a flip at micro stakes) and then you just getting coolered vs sets and such.

If you graph someones micro stakes earnings, typically they will have a slow upward trend from all the small-medium pots you win, and then a sudden downward spike when you get sucked out on. The downward spikes are always your entire stack, which kills all the profits you made to that point. The only people who "won" at micro stakes were simply on little 30k heaters that just never ran bad enough to keep them from moving up stakes.



larskyhnau

0 points · 10 years ago

If someone has played very passively and just called and then suddenly gets very aggressive on the turn or river, do you really need to know exactly, what he has, to figure out, that your top pair with top kicker is probably not the best hand?

Feeling that you "have to call his shove", just because you have top pair top kicker and can't easily put him on an exact hand, is going to murder your winrate at any stakes, particularly if you play deep stacked (70 BB or more).

As stated in the article:

"The game plan for most of the players at the table is to see as many flops as possible, hit a huge hand, then bet and take as much money as they can from it."

And if they can win your entire stack, every single time they hit two pair or better, and you hit a strong pair, that game plan is actually profitable. So the way to beat these kind of players is to make them pay for all the flops, they want to see, by opening and C-betting quite wide, but not pay them off with your entire stack, when they finally hit a huge hand.

Being unable to fold "strong" hands is just as big a mistake as playing too many hands or chasing too much after draws.



Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

I think you didn't play higher than NL2 and didn't ever get educated in poker if you got problems with folding overpairs that's your huge problem but please don't tell us that NL2-5 are unbeatable

L **larskyhnau**
0 points · 11 years ago

I have been playing a week now at Party Poker, which is supposedly one of the softest sites of them all, mostly at 25\$ no limit. And while I have definitely run into some bad players, I think this article as well as the one about Party Poker in particular is over-exaggerating, just how "soft" micro stakes games in general and Party Poker in particular really is.

Yes there are some really bad players out there, who will stack off for 70BB with A4 on a A, K, J, XX board. But the sad truth is, that you only run into them once. So unless you are lucky to get the right hand at the right time, someone else will get their money, before you do, and then they are gone forever. So even at a supposedly "soft" site like Party Poker, most of the time you will find yourself playing against regulars, who might not exactly be world champions, but who certainly know, what they are doing.

And therefore you need to be able to play some good solid poker to be profitable. So while much of the advice given in the article is good, an advice like "don't bluff" definitely isn't. Most hands are going to be raised preflop either by yourself or another player, so most flops you get to will be head-to-head or 3-way at most. And if you follow the advice of "don't bluff", and just check-fold every single time, you don't flop top pair or better, you will get absolutely crushed by the regulars.

So the sad truth is, that even at micro stakes and even at a "soft" site like Party Poker, you need to learn to mix up your game and throw some bluffs out there in the right situations. And you also need to learn when to turn your hand into a bluff-catcher. Because many aggressive regulars WILL try to take you of your hand, if you check to them. And against these players you don't maximize value by mindlessly leading out every single time, you make a pair and check, when you don't.

Also, what is never discussed on this or any other poker sites, is rake. Most poker sites charge 5% rake out of every hand, that goes postflop, with some maximum pr. hand, which is only rarely reached at the micro limits. There are rake-back deals or sign-up bonuses, but even accounting for those and for the rake-free hands, where you pick up the pot uncontested preflop, you will still be paying at least 3 cents in rake for every dollar, you put into a pot.

And that means, that even to just break even, you need to have a winrate of at least 3%. So the reality is, that there are many winning players at micro stakes. But for the majority of people, most if not all their winnings go to pay the rake.

S **Scott**
0 points · 10 years ago

I agree wholeheartedly. This article may very well have been relevant 4 years ago when it was written. The problem is, people fail to realize that information travels at the speed of light now, and what was a killer strategy 4 years ago, is now EVERYBODY'S killer strategy. And for that reason, doesn't seem to do much killing anymore.

People are much more conscious of this caveman strategy now. I played 'ABC' at micros exclusively for a long time, and what happens? You wait, and wait, and wait, and wait, for a good spot. Then you throw out your 3x bb raise, and the whole table folds, yes even the "loose" players. Congrats, you just made seven

cents with your KK. Or even worse, one of the other tight players (which is the vast majority these days) also hits a hand when you hit yours. Now your QQ is destroyed by AA, and you have to wait another 45 minutes for a hand that may repair the damage.

You can't just label certain stakes as "loose" or "tight", it always always always depends on the table, and on your opponents. There are loose micro games, and tight micro games. And the opponents vary at each table. If you decide your strategy before even stepping into a game, and if you can't adjust to the actual playing styles of the players at the table, you will lose money, and become frustrated as all hell that the "winning strategy" you learned online, isn't winning.

Then you'll get online and bitch about how online micros are unbeatable, when really, you never bothered to consider that you might be playing against 10 people who read the same articles you did.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

I have been playing on Bodog for almost two years now. I mostly play 10-25 cent nl. I am stuck for over a thousand. I feel like I am a decent player, but I am constantly losing to drawing hands. It seems like every time I am ahead, players suck out on the river. Then I seem to tilt and play bad and lose even more. It is very frustrating. It doesn't seem to matter how good I play. Does anyone have any sound advice for me?

G

Greg

0 points · 11 years ago

You will always get sucked out on. You will always take occasional big hits. They will always be annoying. This will always happen. It will always happen no matter how good you get.

The difference is made in how you deal with it. Just lost 100bb due to a suck out? Losing another 100bb due to tilt is a monumental mistake. A huge mistake that will cripple your winrate. Losing 100bb to variance is fine (in fact, it's all to be expected), losing 100bb due to tilt however is not.

Over a long enough time period variance will work to balance itself out. That's just probability doing it's thing – so don't worry about it. Instead, expect it. Stop worrying so much about individual results and focus on individual decisions instead.

Playing winning poker is working on the parts of the game you can control, and not letting the parts of the game you can't control affect you.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

The first rule is play as many tables as u are able to play!!! The second is, strictly following the ABC poker rules. This is the way how can you beat this limits. Its only about mathematics...not poker skills

M

meduza

0 points · 10 years ago

you can not bluff idiots, or calling stations. Unfold your net (premium hands) stretch it (preflop, post flop) and the fish will put their heads into it. Do not chase as a hunter wait like a fisherman. unless u want to gamble..

but... careful with the tight image, eventually fish will notice, so bleed time to time a little (small bluffs.. getting caught etc)

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SwC Poker (/rooms/swcpoker/) is my favourite room to play at. It has the worst players you can find online right now.

You need to get some bitcoin (/bitcoin/) to play here, but it's worth it.

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Beginner Poker Tips

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

There is a very steep learning curve in Poker. At the start a little information will take you a long way, but as you improve, the new information you learn won't add as much to your game.

So if you are a *beginner poker player* reading this article, this is probably the most useful and money saving information you will ever read. If you absorb all of the **beginner poker tips** below, you may even turn from a losing player into a break-even or winning player.



These **beginner poker tips** won't turn you into an expert player in ten minutes, but they will set you on the right track to becoming a winning poker player.

1] Don't play too many hands.

A very common mistake that amateur players make is not being selective enough with their starting hands. Don't fall into the common trap of thinking that 'any hand can win'. Although this is true, some hands are more likely to win than others and will help you win more money, whilst others will help you in losing more money. So be selective about which hands you play.

Here's a handy article on [starting hand selection \(.../basic/starting-hand-selection/\)](#) for you.

Good starting hand selection is the foundation of every winning poker player's game. Learn it!

2] Don't bluff too much.

Another common misconception about poker is that you need to bluff to win. You may see spectacular bluffs on the WSOP shows, but these are edited to show the highlights of the tournaments and so give the wrong impression of the frequency that top players bluff. [Bluffing in poker](http://poker(..../basic/bluffing/) ([../..../basic/bluffing/](http://poker(..../basic/bluffing/)) is not as essential as you think it is.

If you are a beginner online poker player, it is better to play your cards well rather than trying to bluff your opponents out of hands. It is good to try occasional bluffs here and there, but the real art of knowing when to bluff comes from knowledge and practice.

You may also be interested in taking a look at the [how often should I bluff in poker?](http://poker(..../articles/strategy/how-often-bluff/) ([../..../articles/strategy/how-often-bluff/](http://poker(..../articles/strategy/how-often-bluff/)) article.

3] Think about your opponent's cards.

It is vitally important in poker to **think about the strength of your opponent's hand, and not just your own**. It is nice to have a big hand, but if you think that your opponent has a better hand than you, you should prepare to fold. For example a straight is a decent hand, but if there are four cards of the same suit on the board and your opponent pushes all in, do you still think you have the best hand?

Find out more about thinking on higher levels in the article on [multiple level thinking in poker](http://poker(..../psychology/multiple-level-thinking/) ([../..../psychology/multiple-level-thinking/](http://poker(..../psychology/multiple-level-thinking/)). It's a bit of an advanced concept, but it is very interesting nonetheless.

4] Play against players worse than you.

This may seem obvious, but you will be surprised at the number of players who go against this simple principle. If you are better than the players who you are playing against, it makes sense that you will be a winner in the long run. If you were the 10th best player in the world, it would not be profitable to sit at a table with the top 9 players in the world.

Choose your games and limits just as carefully as the cards you play with. Good [table selection](http://poker(..../basic/table-selection/) ([../..../basic/table-selection/](http://poker(..../basic/table-selection/)) will help you to find those fishy poker tables in the lobby.

5] Think about your position.

Table position (<http://pokerstrategy.com/basic/position/>) is a very important factor in poker, especially in Texas Holdem (<http://pokerstrategy.com/texas-holdem/>). The best positions to be in are when you are last to act on the hand, for example, when you are on the button. This means that you gain knowledge about what kind of hand they may have before the action gets to you. Having good position in a hand can easily turn a losing hand into a winning one.

Position plays a much bigger role in no limit Texas Hold'em than you think. It can often be more important than the cards themselves, and make the difference between winning and losing a hand.

6] Pay attention to the game.

The best way to pick up tells is to watch your opponents and how they play in each pot. Even when you are not in the hand, you should still concentrate on the game to understand how your opponents play.

Hopefully you will see what moves the players make when they don't have the best hand, and what moves they make when they do have the best hand. The more information you can get from your opponents, the better the opportunity you will have to beat them.

7] Don't jump in at the high limits.

There are two reasons why you shouldn't play for too much money as a beginner. Firstly, the players at the higher limits will be better than the players at the lower limits. There is less chance that you will be able to beat them and you will spend a lot of money trying to learn the game in the process.

Secondly, you only want to play at limits you can afford. You should not play at limits where you are going to drop money that you cannot afford to lose. There is more information on this subject in the bankroll management (<http://pokerstrategy.com/basic/bankroll-management/>) article. You may also find the Fergulator (<http://pokerstrategy.com/tools/pokerbank/fergulator/>) tool useful too.

Without bankroll management, you will never be able to become a winning player, even if you use perfect strategy.

8] Don't pay too much for draws.

You will often find yourself holding half a hand that only needs one card to complete your flush or your straight. As a general rule, if your opponent is betting heavily, it is unlikely to be profitable to chase after these draws. However, if there is only a small amount of betting it may be wise to call in the hope of making your hand. If the amount your opponent bets seems too big to warrant a call to make your hand, then don't.

You can find detailed information on how much you should call for draws in the [pot odds](#) ([../mathematics/pot-odds/](#)), strategy guide. A free (and hopefully useful) tool for helping you to work out whether or not to call bets with draws is [SPOC \(Simple Pot Odds Calculator\)](#). ([../tools/pokerbank/spoc/](#)).

9] Suited cards aren't that great.

The ultimate beginner mistake (that even some intermediate players make) is over-valuing suited cards. Flushes are not as common as you think, and if you [limp in](#) ([/videos/splitsuit/limped-pots/](#)) with your two small suited cards, there is the chance that you will lose all your money to a higher flush if the flush does come.

Just because your cards are of the same suit, it **only improves that hand by 2%** compared to if your hand was not suited. This marginal improvement is too small to warrant calling pre-flop raises, so learn to fold the small suited cards. You will be saving yourself some money in the long run.

10] Know the rules.

As obvious as it seems, there is no substitute for knowing the rules of the game. You don't want to find yourself calling a player all in, thinking that your straight beats his flush and losing all of your chips. There is no way you can be a winning poker player if you don't know the fundamental rules of the game.

Furthermore, each card room and casino may have its own unique set of rules that you must abide by, so make sure you familiarize yourself with them before jumping into any game.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy](#) ([/strategy/](#)).

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? **Anonymous**
0 points · 11 years ago

I agree! Very useful. Thanks for that!! :)

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 13 years ago

Great site, with articles easy to understand ;]

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 13 years ago

love this site learnt a lot of tricks, will be trying som out tomorrow

S **Silvana**
0 points · 10 years ago

Thanks for using inclusive language. Way too many sites write about poker as if it's a game that only men play. (:

G **Greg**
0 points · 10 years ago

No probs. Can't promise I've been able to do it 100% of the time, so please don't be offended if you see a bunch of "he's" in another article.

P **PokerChamp**
0 points · 8 years ago

Well I prefer mind games ,goods cards isn't everything you depend on I compiled my experience over here
<http://www.mediafire.com/do...>
([http://www.mediafire.com/download/4oothk6tpo463ax/How I made 1016%24 in 3 days online playing poke](http://www.mediafire.com/download/4oothk6tpo463ax/How_I_made_1016%24_in_3_days_online_playing_poke)

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 9 years ago

great site. will read many times for sure.

G **Greg**
0 points · 9 years ago

Thanks Mr. piranha :)

C **Christ Jopher**
0 points · 9 years ago

@christjopher (<http://casinoblogg.norskcasinoguide.com/>). Tips are always helpful to improve your playing skills. This content is such full of valuable information and quality tips which can help us to win more money. Casino is also known as game of luck but a preplanned strategy is always beneficial.

M **Miguel**
0 points · 11 years ago

<http://goo.gl/vztqk> (<http://goo.gl/vztqk>).
Or you can start to win thanks to this!

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 9 years ago

Has fixed a lot of mistakes I've been making as a beginner, understanding a lot more now! Great site! thanks!

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 13 years ago

Thank you

G

Greg

0 points · 10 years ago

Thank you

?

Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

Brilliant site. Has improved my game immediately. Am reading it whilst playing online so it gives me an extra bonus of helping me not to get bored and playing weak hands just for kicks (and losing as a result!)

G

Greg

0 points · 10 years ago

Awesome, thanks Monroe.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

Really good website. I just wonder, why someone who know all this doesn't play online or in real casino and instead make a website full with affiliate marketing links...

G

Greg

0 points · 12 years ago

Thanks zoxx! I really like making websites and writing about poker, so it's an enjoyable way for me to spend my time.

Unfortunately I don't know everything there is to know about poker, so I guess that explains why I work on this website in between playing poker haha.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

Indeed, truly a great informative site! Keep up the good work!

G

Greg

0 points · 10 years ago

:)

S

Selina Bond

0 points · 8 years ago

It is very tough for the beginners to learn and play the poker game at online. This poker tips are useful for players to increase the chance of winning. One of the important things is never gamble a money while playing poker because It can afford you to lose.

O

onlinecasinosdoc.com.au

0 points · 11 years ago

I learn something new and useful from your each and every post and it's useful for me in my regular life.

G

Greg

0 points · 10 years ago

I'm touched. Congratulations on your doctorate in online casinos.

E

Eric Carriere

0 points · 10 years ago

Solid tips. I was watching an interview with Fabrice Touil once, and he suggested that a player should know when to walk away. I think that is something that this list was missing, knowing your limits.

G

Greg

0 points · 10 years ago

This is a very good point.

Poker is unforgiving, and if you force yourself to play when you're prone to making bad decisions (tilt, tiredness, drunk, etc.) you're not going to do your bankroll any favours. Knowing when to leave the table is just as important as knowing when to sit down.

Thanks SeeD. Going to see if I can find that interview :)

O **oddsandpots**
0 points · 8 years ago

Wonderful Tips.I am very thankful to u for sharing this information.Thanks....[Oddsandpots](http://www.oddsandpots.com/)
(<http://www.oddsandpots.com/>).

L **larskyhnau**
0 points · 8 years ago

I think there is a rule number 11, which should be pointed out as just as important as these other 10. And that is "learn to fold". For me at least one of the biggest leaks in my game, when I started playing, was my lack of willingness to let go of a big hand, when my opponent suddenly changed his aggression level and went from a passive call-call-call mode to a very aggressive raise or bet mode, typically on the river.

J **John Kris - Casino Archives**
0 points · 6 years ago

Know your odds, and find out which games are the best with odds.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 8 years ago

Ive pretty much read every article and watched all of Split-suit's videos. I want to start playing a lot more and currently have an account on Bovada. So far I have not been successful. I would like to start keeping tabs on my opponents but the problem is I live in Wyoming and cannot find a decent site to play. Do you have any suggestions? I

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 9 years ago

Dude after reading this article. i won all my lost bet... Thanks a lot you are the best

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 9 years ago

4] Play against players worse than you.

I disagree with that.

"The only way to get smarter is by playing a smarter opponent."

- fundamentals of chess 1883

That fundamental of chess also can be used to poker.

J **JP**
0 points · 8 years ago

Then you're a losing player.

G **Greg**
0 points · 9 years ago

I agree with your disagreement.

Even though sitting with bad players is the easier way to win money, sitting with players who are better than you is a smart long-term investment.

Also, some of the most successful high-stakes cash players are ex-chess players, such as Isaac Haxton and Doug Polk.

Great quote and great point. Thanks Dainius.

Powered by **Commento**(<https://commento.io>).

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(/visit/swcpoker/)




SwC Poker (/rooms/swcpoker/) is my favourite room to play at. It has the worst players you can find online right now.

You need to get some bitcoin (/bitcoin/) to play here, but it's worth it.

Play at SwC Poker

(/visit/swcpoker/)

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Elastic and Inelastic Ranges

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

What does elasticity have to do with poker? It sounds enjoyable.

As usual, inelastic and elastic hands (more specifically *ranges*) are just the terms behind a concept that you've probably considered whilst in the middle of a session, or glossed over whilst reading other [strategy articles \(/../\)](#).



In *this* article, I will explain what these stretchy terms mean and how you can use an understanding of them to help you make more profitable [bet sizes \(/strategy/basic/bet-sizing/\)](#).

What are elastic and inelastic hands?

1. A player with an **elastic hand** will make their decision about whether or not to call based on the size of the bet.
2. A player with an **inelastic hand** will either be calling or folding to virtually any sized bet. The size of the bet does not affect their decision on whether or not to call.

The elasticity of a hand is determined by how much of an effect your bet size has on your opponent's decision to call.

Note: For the following examples, assume that we are heads up and the hand has been checked to the river. In addition, our only options are to either call or fold.

1) An elastic hand.

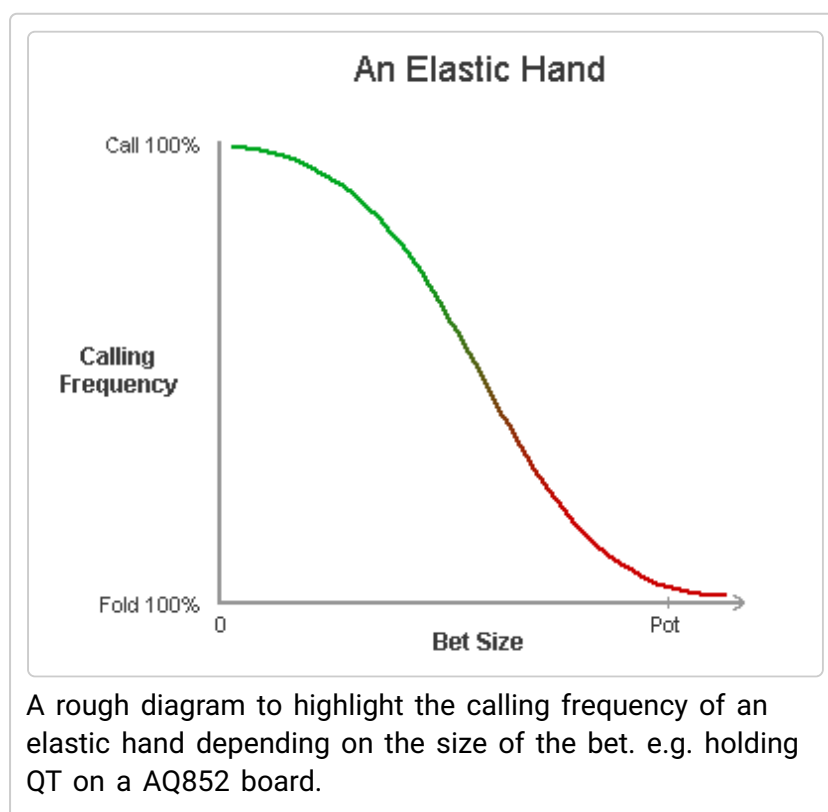
Our Hand: Q♠ T♥

Board: A♦ Q♣ 8♥ 5♥ 2♣

Pot: \$10

- If our opponent bets between \$3 and \$5, we will **call**.
- If our opponent bets between \$5 and \$8, we may **call** or **fold**.
- If our opponent bets between \$8 and \$10, we will **fold**.

This is an elastic hand because whether or not we call is influenced by the size of our opponent's bet. Our decision is flexible and it varies, so it's an elastic hand.



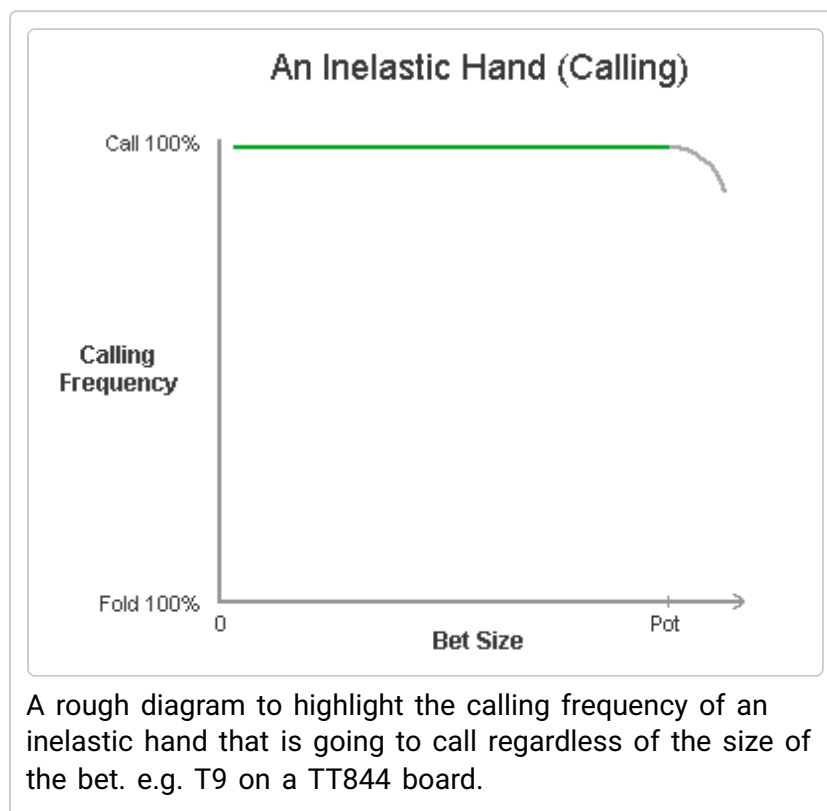
2) An inelastic hand.

Our Hand: T♥ 9♦

Board: T♦ T♠ 8♠ 4♠ 4♣

Pot: \$10

- If our opponent bets between \$3 and \$5, we will **call**.
- If our opponent bets between \$5 and \$8, we will **call**.
- If our opponent bets between \$8 and \$10, we will **call**.



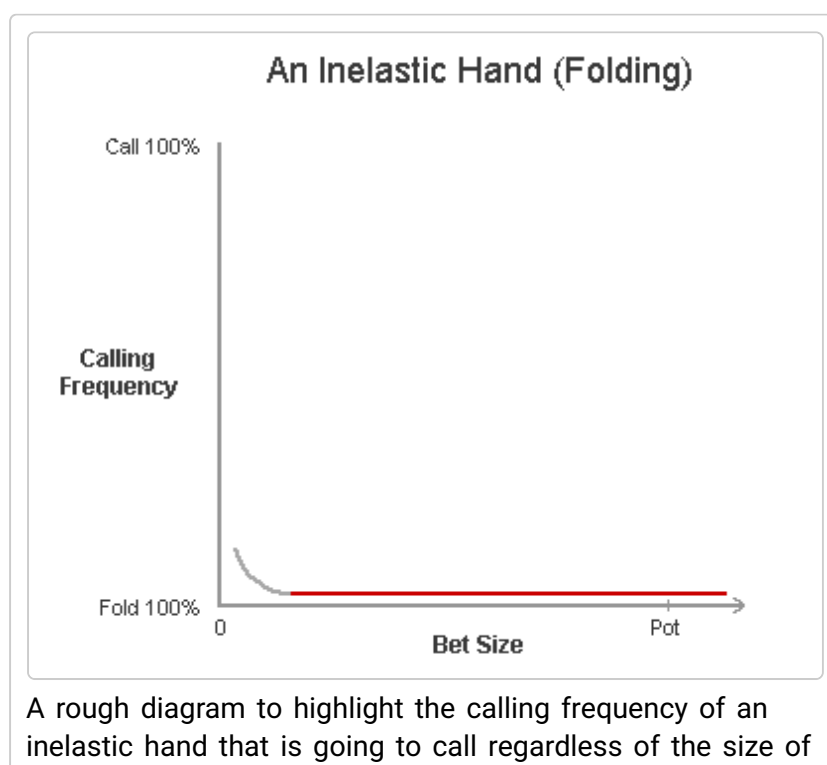
Conversely, our decision would be the complete opposite if we have a slightly different hand on the same board.

Our Hand: 5♥ 6♣

Board: T♦ T♠ 8♠ 4♠ 4♣

Pot: \$10

- If our opponent bets between \$3 and \$5, we will **fold**.
- If our opponent bets between \$5 and \$8, we will **fold**.
- If our opponent bets between \$8 and \$10, we will **fold**.



These are **inelastic hands** because the size of our opponent's bet has no effect on our decision to **call or fold**. Our decision isn't flexible and it doesn't vary, so they are inelastic hands.

Elastic and inelastic ranges.

So now we know what inelastic and elastic hands are, what about ranges? Well, a range ([../rem/range/](#)) is made up of lots of hands, so we can say that:

- If a range mostly consists of elastic hands, it's an *elastic range*.
- If a range mostly consists of inelastic hands, it's an *inelastic range*.

How much do I mean when I say “mostly”? **If a range is made up of at least 75% elastic or inelastic hands, you can safely call it an elastic or inelastic range.**

We prefer to work with ranges because it's unlikely that you're going to be able to put your opponent on one specific hand ([/strategy/general/putting-players-on-hands/](#)). So it's more useful to determine whether our opponent's *range* -- as opposed to *hand* -- is elastic or inelastic.

Note: The degree of "elasticity" of a range will vary. Certain ranges can be more elastic or less elastic than others. In this article I'm looking at the ranges on each end of this scale.

How to work out whether or not a range is elastic or inelastic.

How do you know if a range consists of mostly one type of hand (e.g. 75%+ inelastic hands)?

The fastest way is through intuition. If you have a lot of experience with putting opponents on ranges of hands it will be easy to say “I think they have an inelastic range in this spot”. It may not be perfectly accurate and it's not something every player will be able to do, but it is the quickest method.

Alternatively, you could be more accurate by splitting your opponents range (the one you've assigned to them) in to elastic hands and inelastic hands. Using hand combinations ([../mathematics/hand-combinations/](#)), you could then work out the percentage of each type of hand in that range. If there are more than 75% elastic hands, then you could call it an elastic range.

How to play against an inelastic range.

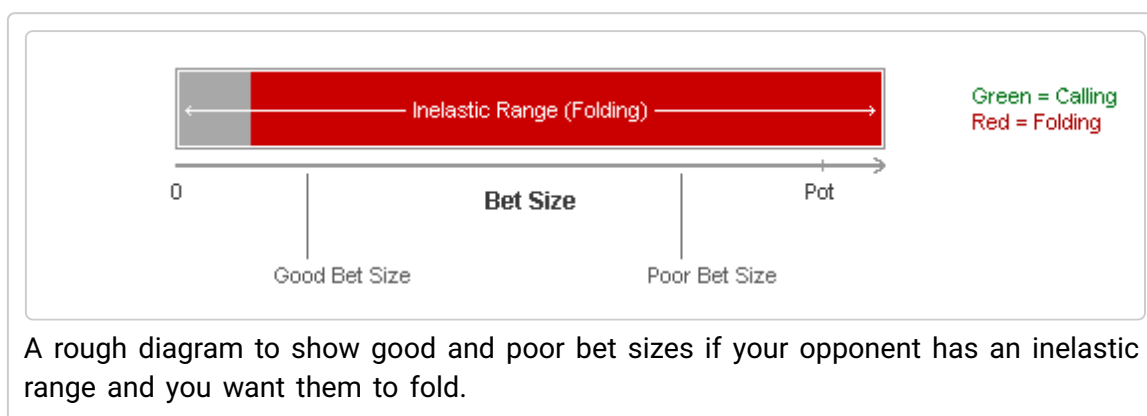
- If you have a good hand, bet big.
- If you have a weak hand and you think your opponent will fold, bet small.

Playing against an inelastic range is easy. All you have to remember is that **your opponent already has a fixed decision in their mind, and your bet size is not going to have any effect on that decision.**

You can easily take advantage of an inelastic range by betting big with your strong hands (as your opponents will just as happily call a big bet as they would a small bet), and by betting small with your bluffs if you think your opponent will fold (as your opponents will just as happily fold to a small bet as they would to a big bet).

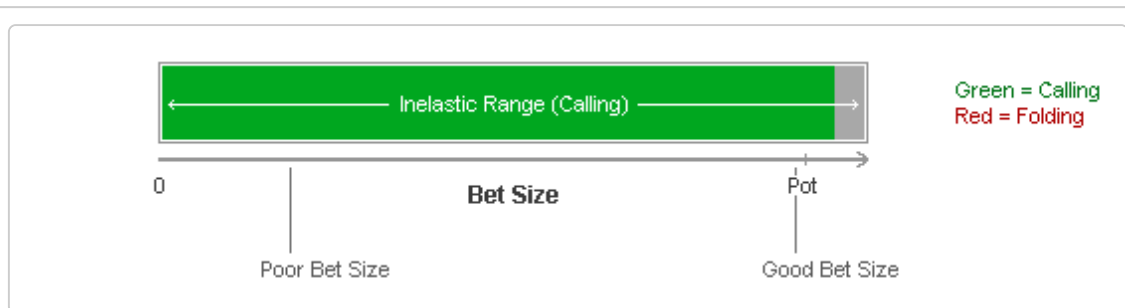
A perfect example of exploiting an inelastic range is Zeebo's theorem (<http://www.thetheorems.com/zeebo/>). The theorem states that *"No player is capable of folding a full house on any betting round, regardless of the size of the bet."* So if you're betting half-pot when your opponent could well have a full-house in their range, you are severely missing out on value.

Playing against an inelastic ranges diagrams.



If your opponent has an inelastic range and you want them to fold, you should bet small. If you bet big you are risking more than you need to when a smaller bet will achieve the same result.

The smaller you can bet when you want your opponent to fold their inelastic range -- whilst still achieving a high fold frequency -- the better.



A rough diagram to show good and poor bet sizes if your opponent has an inelastic range and you want them to call.

If your opponent has an inelastic range and you want them to call, you should bet big. If you bet small you are missing out on value due to the fact that your opponent is just as likely to call a small bet as they are a big bet.

The bigger you can bet when you want your opponent to call with their inelastic range – whilst still achieving a high call frequency – the better.

Note: Not all inelastic ranges are going to either call or fold 100% of the time for any bet size. I've accounted for this with the grey areas at the extremes of each diagram above.

Playing against an inelastic range example.

Here's a basic and common example: we are in position against a half-decent opponent that doesn't know what floating ([../..plays/float/](https://www.pokerstrategy.com/playing/float/)) is.

We make a continuation bet ([../..plays/continuation-bet/](https://www.pokerstrategy.com/playing/continuation-bet/)) on this flop:

Our Hand: A♣ K♦

Board: Q♦ 7♥ 2♠

Pot: \$11

On this flop, our opponent's calling range is *inelastic*. Why? Because our opponent's range is essentially polarized to two types of hands:

1. **Strong hands that will call.** Big pairs (e.g. AQ), overpairs (KK+), mid-pocket pairs (e.g. TT), sets, two pair, and middle pair hands (e.g. A7).
2. **Weak hands that will fold.** Everything else.

1) If our opponent has a strong hand like top pair or better, they are going to comfortably call any size bet on this flop. For the most part, they are going to be just as happy to call a pot-size bet as they would be to call a half-pot size bet.

2) Any other hand on this flop would be considered weak. If our opponent has any other hand like a pair of 2s or a low pocket pair (these are the at the top of their "weak range"), they cannot comfortably call a bet. They are equally as likely to fold to a half-pot bet as they would to a pot-size bet.

There are virtually no hands in our opponent's range on this flop that will call a half-pot bet, but fold to a pot-size bet.

If we plan on making a continuation bet bluff with a hand like AK, we should bet small -- around \$6. **A half-pot size bet will achieve the same result as a pot-size bet, so we should bet small to minimize our losses when our opponent does have a hand worth calling with.**

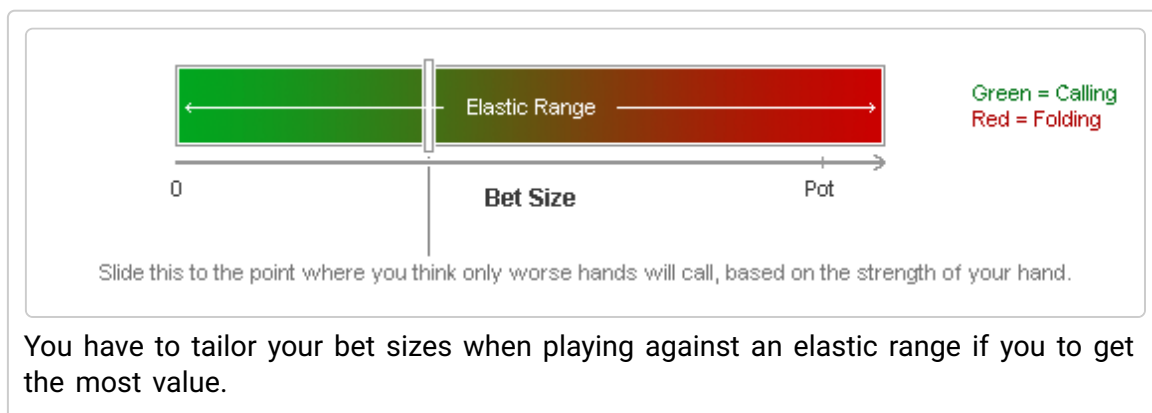
How to play against an elastic range.

- If you have a good hand, you should bet small enough so that worse hands than yours can call (for thin value (../thin-value/)).
- If you have a weak hand and you think your opponent will fold, you should bet just big enough so that stronger hands will fold.

If you know that your opponent has an elastic range, you should vary your bet sizes depending on what you want to achieve. If you want to entice your opponent to call, you should lean toward betting a small amount. If you want your opponent to fold, you should look toward betting big.

Playing against an elastic range is a lot more difficult than playing against an inelastic range. Against an elastic range you need to tailor your bet sizes appropriately, which requires more skill than simply choosing either end of the scale (i.e. bet big or bet small) as you would against an inelastic range.

Playing against an elastic range diagram.



If you have a decent hand and your opponent has an elastic calling range, **you want to size your bet so that only worse hands will call.**

If you size your bet too big, you will only get calls from hands that are better than yours. If you size your bet too small, you will miss out on value from hands that are only slightly worse than yours.

Playing against an elastic range example.

We in position against one other thoughtful player. We raise on the button and get called by the BB. The flop is:

Our Hand: A♣ J♦

Board: J♠ 7♥ 2♠

Pot: \$13

Our opponent checks. We make a continuation bet of \$9 and our opponent calls. The turn is as follows:

Board: J♠ 7♥ 2♠ 5♦

Pot: \$31

Our opponent's calling range on this turn is *elastic*. This is because their range will respond differently to different bet sizes. Here's a basic overview of what we could expect to get calls from with varying bet sizes:

- **Small bet (\$16):** weak draws, strong draws, top pair+
- **Medium bet (\$23):** strong draws, top pair+
- **Big bet (\$30):** top pair+

Seeing as we want to get value from weaker hands than ours, a big bet (\$30) isn't a great option. If we make a big bet on this turn we are forcing out hands that we would get value from, such as weaker Jx hands and most draws. Our bet size is only attractive to the parts of our opponent's range that have us beat, such as two-pair hands or better.

Conversely, if we make a smallish bet (\$18 sounds good), we will be getting calls from the parts of our opponent's range that we will get value from. More one-pair hands are more likely to call, and so are flush and straight draws -- which we have good [equity](#) [\(../mathematics/equity/\)](#) against.

Note: I'm sure some of you will be screaming "but don't we want drawing hands to fold?" Not really, because they are still getting bad [pot odds](https://mathematics.pot-odds/) with our \$18 bet. They are getting 2.7 to 1, when they ideally need just over 4 to 1.

If they call with bad pot odds, we profit.

Elastic and inelastic hands evaluation.

The terms "inelastic" and "elastic" calling ranges describe something you were probably already familiar with, but didn't know much in-depth stuff about. The principles are simple:

- **Inelastic ranges:** If you have a good hand, bet big.
- **Elastic ranges:** If you have a decent hand, only bet enough so that worse hands will call.

Or to put it even more simply:

- With **inelastic ranges**, bet sizes do not matter.
- With **elastic ranges**, bet sizes matter.

Inelastic ranges are easy, because it's mostly about betting big and [maximizing value](https://value-betting/) when you have a good hand. Elastic ranges are trickier, because you have to tailor your bet sizes to extract as much value as possible, whilst not betting so much that only better hands will call.

As a beginner player, understanding and being able to take advantage of inelastic ranges is the most valuable thing you could take from this article. Exploiting elastic ranges is something that takes a lot of skill in an attempt to gain smaller profits, and is something that experienced players will want to work on refining.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy](https://strategy/).

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? **Anonymous**

0 points · 12 years ago

Hey this is a great article, but I can't very good resources to expand upon this concept on the web? Did you learn about this from a book? If so what is its name?

M **Mike1981**

0 points · 5 years ago

Poker books are great when you are a micro stakes player. When you get to low/mid stakes, you need to do some research of your own.

G **Greg**

0 points · 10 years ago

I haven't seen this in any poker books. It's just a concept I picked up from poker forums. I haven't found any other detailed articles on the subject, although if you google around you can find a bunch of threads discussing it.

L **larskyhnau**

0 points · 11 years ago

Another very good article. I have two comments:

1. While it might theoretically be advantageous to raise big with value hands and small with bluff hands against an inelastic range, people have to be aware, that by doing so, they will turn their own range very face up. So if your opponents is paying just a tiny amount of attention and is even a little bit intelligent, its not going to work very well. They will quickly begin to turn it against you e.g. by check-raising you with bluff hands, when you make that small raise.
2. It is true, that from a pure pot odds standpoint, we dont want drawing hands to fold, when we raise with a made hand, that has more than 50% equity against the draw. However that does not take into account the effect of implied odds.

In the example any spade will potentially complete a flush, any 8, 6, 4 or 3 will potentially complete a straight, and any Q or K could potentially have given our opponent a higher pair than ours. So there are no less than 27 out of the 46 unknown cards, we really don't like to see on the river, since they will put us in a very awkward and difficult spot, where we no longer have any idea, if we are ahead or behind.

So in that particularly situation, I would personally be more than happy, if my opponent gave up and folded. And it's not really about "protection", or because I am "scared" to lose the pot. It's because if my opponent continues with a draw, implied odds are almost entirely on his side.

If he misses his draw, it's the easiest decision in the world for him to fold his K high or pair of 5, or whatever useless junk he will have at that point. But I on the other hand will have a very difficult decision to make with my pair of

J's, when one of the 21 flush- or straightfillers come on the river or even one of the 6 fill a flush, but could still have given my opponent a better pair. I have essentially two options, which are both very unattractive:

1. I can fold to any riverbet. But if I do so, I am giving my opponent several bluff outs or bluff equity besides his actual outs/equity, since any just half decent player will quickly pick up on this playing pattern and know how to abuse it. For example he might pretend to have hit the flush on the river, while he was in reality chasing after a straight and has only T high.
2. I can make a cry call. But if I do that, I am giving my opponent implied odds for the times, he makes his straight or flush or higher pair, which might well make his call profitable in spite of the incorrect pot odds.

So on such a draw heavy board as in that example, and with two potential overcards to my pair (K and Q), I really wouldn't mind to make a slightly larger turn bet and fold out a lot of the draws. So I would probably be betting on the larger side there, perhaps around 75% of pot or so, and really not be too sad, if my opponent folded.



Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

great article!

Powered by **Commento**(<https://commento.io>).

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Range Merging

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#)

You may find the article on [thin value \(/thin-value/\)](#) useful as a primer for this range merging article.

Range merging or “merging your range” is something that you will run in to every now and then on poker forums and in [training videos \(/../../videos/\)](#). It's quite an advanced topic, so I'm going to need your full attention for this one.



As a word of warning, **range merging** was something that took me some time to fully get my head around. Explaining this principle is likely going to be harder for me than it is for you to understand it.

So prepare yourself to either learn everything there is to know about range merging or to sit back and watch my teaching skills fly out of the window.

What is range merging?

Range merging is when you bet with a medium-strength hand on the river, where the board makes your opponent believe that you can only be betting with either the nuts or bluffing with nothing at all (most likely bluffing).

Opponents will often call with weak hands as they are confident that they will be able to catch you out on your bluff. These hands that opponents call with are therefore known as “bluffcatchers”.

However, **our medium-strength hand actually beats their weak bluffcatcher** that they thought they were catching us out with, so we take the pot with that little extra value.

Range merging diagram.

What opponent *thinks* we will bet with.

What opponent *will call* a bet with.

What we are *actually* betting with.



I know, I know, it's impressively confusing on first glance. However, I've got a lot more explaining to do first so bare with me. I need to go in to some more detail about those bluffcatchers first...

What are bluffcatchers?

Bluffcatchers are hands that you wouldn't bet with because they are not strong enough, but you will more than happily call a bet with them if you have the suspicion that your opponent is going for a bluff on the river.

Bluffcatcher example.

We are heads up against an opponent on the flop and first to act with 9♣ T♦. The flop comes A♠ 9♥ 7♠. We bet the size of the pot and our opponent calls.

The turn is A♣. We check and our opponent checks behind us.

The river is J♥. We check and our opponent bets ½ the size of the pot. The action is back on us.

We call with our pair of 9s. Our opponent turns over K♠ T♠ for a busted flush draw and we win the pot.

Bluffcatcher example evaluation.

In this situation we do not expect our opponent to bet with a hand like a pair of Js, 9s, or 7s. This is because they know that they only expect to get called by hands like a higher pair, Ax or better. Therefore it is the safer option for them to check and take down the pot rather than risking more money unnecessarily.

It is very unlikely that our opponent would bet with a mediocre hand on the river.

Therefore, because our opponent is not betting with a mediocre hand, they are either betting with a very strong hand or they are bluffing with air (this is described as having a “polarized” range). Seeing as our opponent didn't bet the turn or raise on the flop, we can safely assume that our opponent is more likely to be [bluffing](https://www.pokerstrategy.com/basic/bluffing/) as opposed to betting with a strong hand like Ax or better.

So, whilst we do not have a hand strong enough for us to want to bet out with, we are more than happy to call this strange looking bet to catch our opponent's bluff. Hence the term “bluff catcher”.

This article involves a lot of **level 3** thinking. See [multiple level thinking](https://www.psychology.com/multiple-level-thinking/) for more information on that.

The aim of range merging is to take advantage of the logic behind what we just did.

Explanation of range merging.

To get to grips with range merging, we're going to have to turn the situation around and look at it from the opposite angle.

Let's put ourselves in the shoes of our opponent. However, this time we have a better hand like Q♦ Q♠. Let's forget about the weakly played turn and assume that we are on the river in the same situation as before.

Our hand: Q♦ Q♠

Board: A♠ 9♥ 7♠ A♣ J♥

Many players will be tempted to check and take down the pot on a board of A♠ 9♥ 7♠ A♣ J♥. After all, the last thing we want is to get caught out by an opponent that holds an Ace. However, this is a great board to merge our range and take advantage of the player that is willing to call with their bluffcatcher.

By merging our range (i.e. betting with hands in between the nuts and nothing at all), our opponent is very likely going to call with a weaker hand like a pair of 9s, 7s or Js in an attempt to catch us out on a bluff. We are get more value from the hand by merging our range, simply because we are confident that our mediocre hand beats theirs when they think we would only bet with the nuts or nothing at all.

Our opponent is only expecting us to bet out when we are bluffing. Betting with a mediocre hand doesn't seem to make too much sense to them.

The added value of range merging is that our opponent is probably going to call value bets later on down the line when we have the nuts. This is all going to be thanks to our range merging in previous pots.

One thing to remember about range merging.

If you merge your range frequently, opponents will get wise to your game and start slowplaying strong hands as they expect you to continue betting. Therefore, if the example hand above was repeated, the second time around our opponent may well check with an Ace because they will be expecting us to bet with a mediocre hand on the river.

This is more of a metagame (</strategy/psychology/metagame/>) problem more than anything, so I'm not going to go in to the ins and outs of what your opponent thinks and how they are going to react to your plays. Just be aware of how range merging will affect the way your opponents play against you.

Evaluation of range merging.

Range merging is simply taking advantage of players who are trying to catch you out when they think you are bluffing. This article was quite meaty, but I can split it up in to two main sections of learning:

1. Figuring out what a bluffcatcher is and when we use it.
2. Learning how to take advantage of players using bluffcatchers.

If you think of it like that, it might be easier to break down the article and understand the strategy.

If I'm being honest, this principle took absolutely ages for me to get my head around, even after having it explained to me a handful of times. So if you didn't get it on the first read through, try again today or come back and give it a go tomorrow.

This is the original range merging thread at 2+2 (<http://archives1.twoplustwo.com/showflat.php?Cat=0&Number=10167797&page=0&fpart=1&vc=1>) as posted by the infamous aejones (remember the aejones theorem (<http://archives1.twoplustwo.com/showflat.php?Cat=0&Number=10167797&page=0&fpart=1&vc=1>)). However, it's not the easiest read in the world.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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C

Chris C

0 points · 10 years ago

Excellent Read and Well written

?

Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

Why not just call it a thin value bet ? :)

G

Greg

0 points · 11 years ago

It is just a thin value bet. Just a specific type of thin value bet with a fancy term.

J

Joshua Patrick

0 points · 8 years ago

In thin value gets you make value bet sizing, in range merging you make polarized bet sizing

?

Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

10 10 seems like a more range merge bet than QQ, which looks like a standard value bet imo

C

Chris Devine

0 points · 8 years ago

They can also call with mediocre hands though

?

Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

would it be wise to merge your range with say 3rd pair to the board? or is 2nd pair to the board the minimum for merging your range? Also, isnt this also called thin value betting?

Z

zjones111

0 points · 10 years ago

It seems simple enough. If your opponent bets, then it isolates their range to the nuts or nothing, and since you can't beat the nuts you want to just call, hoping to run into a bluff. If they check, then it isolates their range to a hand that beats air, and you want to give them a chance to put YOU on a bluff, and have THEM make the call. However, since you have a mediocre hand that beats their bluff catcher, you win when they call, hence the reason for your raise in the first place, and the term "range merging".

Of course, this doesn't take the human factor into account, so you'd also want to make this decision based off of your opponent's tendencies and whether you feel that they would be making these plays, with these hands, in these situations.

Does that sound about right?

L

larskyhnau

0 points · 11 years ago

Nice article. Its a fairly advanced concept though, and therefore I think, people should really consider, if their opponent has the required level of thinking, before they try to implement it. If not then its useless and will just be burning up money, since you will then get called only by hands, that beat you.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

With the QQ hand it just sounds like a regular value bet if we don't put the other guy on an Ace. I think you need a better example.



Anonymous

0 points · 13 years ago

exactly right



Anonymous

0 points · 12 years ago

i deff think u need a better example as well pre flop action positions...



Anonymous

0 points · 11 years ago

So betting with merge range is the same as betting with bell-range , right ?



Joshua Patrick

0 points · 8 years ago

Range merging is a useful tool for LAGS who are good hand readers, it is a great tool because they're expected to bluff a lot.



Anonymous

0 points · 9 years ago

<http://m.youtube.com/watch?...> (<http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=H5lwtQXXcSo>), this is the perfect example of a merge



Greg

0 points · 9 years ago

Nice, thank you.



Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

I realize that I am "turning JJ/showdown value in a bluff" but this is why this is an advanced theory in the game of NLHE.

D DavyKer
0 points · 9 years ago

..... riiight.

? Anonymous
0 points · 12 years ago

what about the triple range merge

G Greg
0 points · 12 years ago

Haven't got a good handle on that just yet. Need to watch Jungleman play some more.

F Farzad Attaei
0 points · 12 years ago

lmao, it's a myth, mentioned in Micros, there is no such thing as the triple range merge...

A Adaś Bo Branis
0 points · 11 years ago

no no so u as a playar normally merge with 3rd pair on the board but u have 4th pair and u know ur opponent has fifth pair but he doesnt polarize u so he raises ur merge bet but u call cause u know he did that to do that SO U TRIPLE MERGE HIS ASS

S sobookwood
0 points · 8 years ago

probably one of the best poker related comments i have ever read

? Anonymous
0 points · 10 years ago

This isnt range merging from my understanding.

From my understanding, range merging is the act of merging your value range with your bluff range.

i.e.

Ive got JJ where I open the button and call a 3 bet from the BB. Flop comes 4 5 6. Villain leads 2/3 pots and I call. Turn 7, Villain checks and I merge my range and rep an 8 bc I'm not confident that Ive got the best hand due to him 3 betting out of position. So I rep the 8 and possibly get him to fold QQ+ and or AK bc those are all very much in his range. Verse a snug villain, that seems about correct, and the only worse hand that he plays like this and folds is TT and possibly the other two Jacks.

D

DavyKer

0 points · 9 years ago

It sounds like you don't know what your intention is here, you're possibly getting him to fold QQ or AK... but you want QQ to fold but not AK... the point of range merging, taking your example, is you make your opponent feel your range is made up of 8s and bluffs, bluffs being more likely, so they call with some pair on the board, say A7.

?

Anonymous

0 points · 10 years ago

William you donkey, what u explained is simply balancing. All you did was turn your pair of jacks into a bluff, in a spot where they were probably good. That's it.

J

Joshua Patrick

0 points · 8 years ago

The misconception comes from bet sizing, in a Successful merge your bet sizing is going to be such that it looks polarized even though you know you are betting for value. An example is shoving ,QK for a 2/3 to pot size bet on the river of a Q10763 board With a missed flush draw on it.

You know you're hand is good and cAn likely get called by a hand like K10 or A10 and Jacks since your sizing is repping a polarized range it is best to use this when your opponent is the type that likes to induce by checking and calling a lot of rivers when the board runs out relatively safe

J

Joshua Patrick

0 points · 8 years ago

I like to do what I have dubbed the out of position merge, for example. A solid player raises in middle position and you're in the BB and have AQ, you just call and on a Q96 board you check raise repping a draw or 2 pair plus hand. I like betting turn and shoving river when bricks roll off because if they had you beat they would likely want to get it in on the flop so they Often have a few strong nines, 1010 JJ and QJ KQ all of which could get stubborn and pay off when the draws all miss. You really have to make sure your opponent is stubborn though.

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Home ► Strategy ► Concepts ► REM ► Maximize ►

The REM Process - Maximize

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

[REM Process \(/\)](#): [Range \(/range/\)](#) > [Equity \(/equity/\)](#) > **Maximize**

The final (and arguably most important) step in the REM process is "Maximize". This involves making the optimum play to get the most value from your hand.

RANGE
EQUITY
MAXIMIZE

Unfortunately, the art of maximizing your profits from every hand you play is out of the scope of one article. However, what I will be able to do is give you some groundwork for making optimum plays at the table.

Maximizing value on a basic level.

On a basic level, optimum play is to get as much money in the middle with the best hand and save your money when you do not.

When you have the hand with the greatest equity you want to get as much money in to the pot as possible. When you don't have good equity in the hand you want to see future cards as cheaply as possible, which generally involves checking and folding.

You want to play as closely as you can to the [fundamental theorem of poker](#) ([../../theorems/fundamental/](#)) to help you maximize your winnings from each hand you play.

The fundamental theorem of poker.

"Every time you play a hand differently from the way you would have played it if you could see all your opponents' cards, they gain; and every time you play your hand the same way you would have played it if you could see all their cards, they lose."

So if we knew what our opponent was holding at all times, we would be able to make the optimum play on every single betting round. When maximizing value from our hands, we want to try and make the same play that we would make if we could see our opponent's holecards.

One problem.

That's all well and good, but **there is a hell of a lot of middle ground where we will not know if we are ahead of behind in a hand**. Therefore, we just have to make the best play we can with the limited information we have from the range ([../range/](#)) and equity ([../equity/](#)) sections of the REM process ([../](#)).

Betting and raising.

Whenever you bet or raise, ask yourself this question:

| Do I want my opponent to fold or do I want them to call?

Really think about it.

- If you want them to call, you are betting for value.
- If you want them to fold, you are bluffing.

That's all there is to it. **If you do not know whether you want your opponent to do either, you should not be betting.**

Far too many players make bets with no reasoning behind why they are making them. The chances are that if you do not know why you are betting, a large number of your bets are going to be -EV ([../../mathematics/expected-value/](#)).

Betting for value.

A super-common example for you. We raise in the CO and the BB calls.

Our hand: A♦ K♣

Flop: A♠ 9♥ 7♠

As we all should know, on this flop we should bet out. Why? Because we have good equity against our opponent's range, which is likely to be a weaker ace or lower pocket pair. We are betting for value in the hope that our opponent will call with a weaker ace or a flush draw because we have greater equity in the hand (even if they may have a better hand like 2 pair or a set).

Hand Distribution			Equity
Player 1	$\frac{R}{D}$	AdKc	68.531%
Player 2	$\frac{R}{D}$	99,77,A2s+,KsQs,KsJs,KsTs,QsJs,Qs1	31.469%

The equity of our AdKc against villain's range. Found using PokerStove.

Yep that's right, we actually want our opponent to call with a flush draw. If the pot is \$10 and we bet \$8, they are getting terrible odds to chase their flush. Therefore, if they call they are making a mistake and we are gaining from this mistake. If they fold on the other hand, they are making the correct play and we gain nothing.

"Betting to protect your hand" is very bad alternate terminology for "betting for value". What are we protecting our hand from? Players calling with bad odds and worse hands? According to the fundamental theorem of poker we want our opponents to call with bad odds and worse hands, as we gain nothing otherwise.

Try your best to get used to the idea of either betting for value or bluffing. "Protecting your hand" is not the right way to explain your bets - "betting for value" is.

Bluffing.

Our hand: A♠ Q♠

Flop: T♠ 2♥ 7♠

Let's say we raised preflop in the CO and the button calls. Our opponent then bets out 3/4 of the pot on this flop. With our overcards and nut flush draw, we reraise. However, is this reraise for value or as a bluff? In other words, do we want our opponent to call or to fold?

Well, first things first, this all depends on our opponents range. If we figure that our opponent is the type of player to only ever bet out on this sort of flop with top pair or better, our equity in the hand is as follows:

Hand Distribution			Equity
Player 1	$\frac{R}{D}$	AsQs	44.592%
Player 2	$\frac{R}{D}$	QQ-TT,66,22,ATs,KTs,ATo,KTo	55.408%

The equity of our AsQs against villain's range. Found using PokerStove.

As you can see, we do not have the dominant equity in the hand. So in this situation, by raising we are hoping that our opponent will fold their better hand. Therefore we are bluffing. Simple as that.

Sure, it's technically a [semi-bluff](#) ([../../plays/semi-bluff/](#)), because it's not all that bad if our opponent calls this raise, but based on the equity we have right now our raise is a bluff. Hopefully this helps to illustrate the difference between bluffing and betting for value.

Evaluation of "maximize" in the REM process.

I only really covered the north-facing side of the tip of the ice berg in this article. I was going to cover more on maximizing value with checking and calling, but in all honesty I would have just been rehashing some pretty basic strategy to reinforce the same point I put across in the betting and raising section.

Maximizing value in poker is a skill that you will be perfecting for life. A lot of the strategy you read all boils down to making the best decisions possible and getting the most from your hands. As long as you always think about every decision you make, you will continue to improve your game and make optimum plays more frequently.

Poker will always be a game of broken information - one big jigsaw puzzle with a few pieces missing. We just have to try to put it together and do the best we can with the information we have at hand - and then make the best play we can.

Go back to the overview of [The REM Process](#) ([../](#)).

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy](#) ([/strategy/](#)).

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L

larskyhnau**0 points** · 11 years ago

"According to the fundamental theorem of poker we want our opponents to call with bad odds and worse hands, as we gain nothing otherwise."

That is not really true in my opinion. Even if poker was played with "open" hole cards, so that people were able to always make the right decisions when facing raises, the player with the strongest hand would still benefit from raising.

If one player has 75% equity in the hand and the other player 25% equity, the player with 75% equity should make a bet of more than 50% of pot. The other player would then fold, because he knows, he is getting incorrect odds to call, and this would increase the winrate of the betting player from 75% to 100%, which is a huge gain in winrate.

It is true though, that you should know, why you are betting, and if you are happy to get called or not. And if you are not happy to get called, you should have a reason to assume, that your bet will generate enough folds to compensate for the extra money, you expect to lose, when you get called.

?

Anonymous**0 points** · 11 years ago

Previous case has the opponent betting out as the button when we are in the CO. What is really intended here?

?

Anonymous**0 points** · 10 years ago

Just FYI, in your bluffing section, you accidentally input 6,6 into Poker Stove, instead of 7,7 (the flop had a 7 in it, not a 6).

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Thin Value

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#)**Thin Value** > [Example \(example/\)](#)

The term "thin value" is used quite a lot when discussing tricky decisions on the river in [Texas Hold'em \(/\)](#). The ability to get **thin value** from marginal hands is often the difference between good players and great players, so it's worth taking the time to learn about it.

Hopefully you already know the basics of getting value from hands already, but if not, read about [value betting \(/strategy/concepts/value-betting/\)](#) first.



What is thin value?

Thin value is where you value bet marginal hands on the river and expect to make only a small profit from those value bets over the long run.

That's the basics of it, but to fully understand *thin value betting* we're going to need to compare "standard value bets" to "thin value bets". A slightly complicated diagram might help as well.

Thin value explained.

With a strong hand you always want to bet and raise to get as much value from the hand as possible. That's common sense. So generally speaking, with a hand and a board like this:

Your Hand: J♠ J♥

Board: J♦ 7♣ 4♥ A♥ 2♣

...you are going to **betting and raising** all day. There is so much value in betting here it's ridiculous.

Conversely, if the hand looked like this:

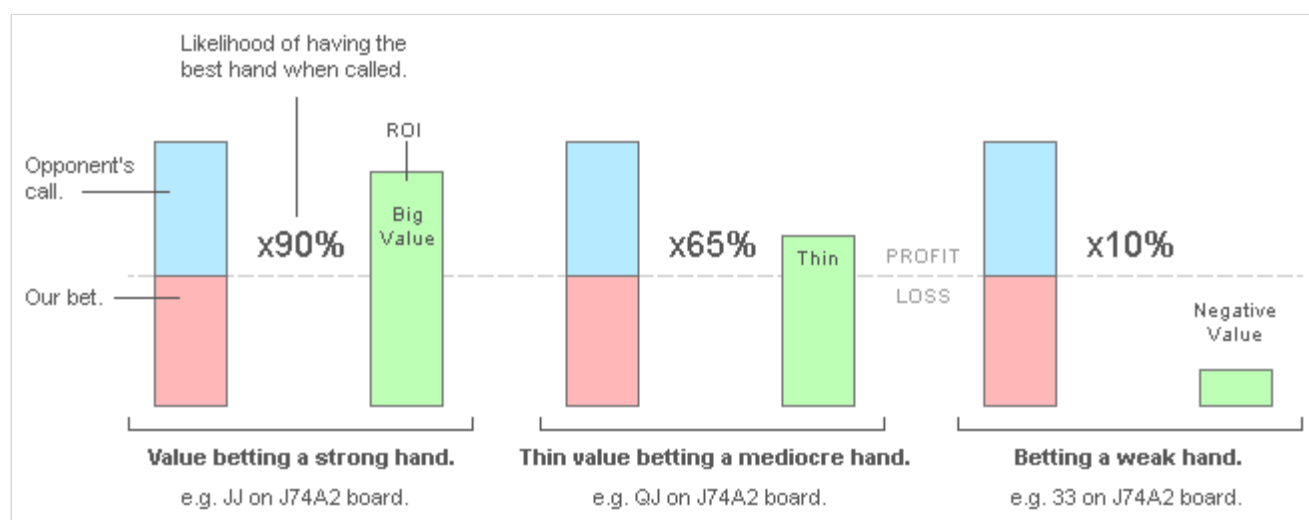
Your Hand: 3♠ 3♥

Board: J♦ 7♣ 4♥ A♥ 2♣

...you are going to be **checking** until the cows come home, because you don't expect any worse hand to call. Hence, there is no *value* in betting here.

The art of getting thin value is when our hand is in the middle of these two extremes and it's not quite as easy to tell whether there is value in betting our hand or not.

Thin value diagram.



This diagram highlights the difference in profit there is to be made between standard value bets, thin value bets and when there is no value in betting based on the percentage likelihood of having the best hand when called.

If we have the best hand greater than 50% of the time, we make a profit. If we have the best hand less than 50% of the time, we lose money because we're risking more than we get back (a negative ROI ([../tournament/roi/](/../tournament/roi/)..()) if you will). **The smaller the likelihood of having the best hand when called, the thinner the value.**

Note: When making a value bet we actually want to get called because we expect to win money when we are called over the long run. If you don't want to get called it's not a value bet, it's a bluff. See [reasons for betting \(/strategy/basic/reasons-to-bet/\)](/strategy/basic/reasons-to-bet/).

Thin value betting example.

I've put the [thin value betting example \(example/\)](#) on a separate page. This article is long enough as it is.

Benefits of thin value betting. Why bet for thin value?

So why exactly should you worry about thin value? Why not just check behind with marginal hands on the river? Well, there are two reasons:

1. **You win more money** by making thin value bets.
2. **You become harder to play against** if you make thin value bets.
 - *(and if you're harder to play against, you make more money again).*

1) Every time you have the opportunity to get value from your hands, no matter how marginal it is, you should take it. The extra few BBs here and there will add to your [winrate \(../other/winrate/\)](#), so why would you ignore it? If you can learn how to bet for thin value you will increase your winrate, it's as simple as that.

2) If you bet for thin value, you will be [balancing your range \(../range-balancing/\)](#) when you're betting on the river. With a balanced range you make it more difficult for your opponents to play against you, which means they will [make more mistakes \(../../videos/splitsuit/common-mistakes-1/\)](#). The more mistakes they make, the more money you will be winning from them.

As I've already mentioned, thin value betting often distinguishes the good players from the great players. If you want to improve your game and your winrate, you will want to get to grips with the art of thin value betting in poker.

How to make good thin value bets.

There are two steps to making good thin value bets:

1. You need to put your opponent on a [range \(../rem/range/\)](#) of hands.
2. You need to evaluate how many hands in that range that you beat or have you beat if you bet and get called.

1) Giving your opponent a range.

If you can't work out a decent range for your opponent based on the way they have played up until that point in the hand, your value bet will just be a shot in the dark. If you can't figure out a good range then you're better off checking (or thinking harder).

Your opponent needs to have an elastic calling range (../elastic-inelastic/) for you to be able to make a thin value bet.

2) Evaluating the hands in that range that you beat and do not have beat if called.

If there are lots of hands in your opponents range that can call a bet and you have beat, then there is obviously value in betting. Conversely, if there are more hands that have you beat, there is no value in betting.

The smaller the difference is between the two (hands you beat and hands that have you beat), the thinner your value bet will be. The better you become at working out your opponents range, the easier you will find it to make thinner and thinner value bets.

It's easy enough to know *how to make good thin value bets*, but actually *doing* it is another thing. But as with all tough decisions in poker, it will get easier the more you practice.

Thin value betting evaluation.

| Thin value betting is tricky but it makes you money, so don't ignore it.

The key to value betting is being able to put your opponent on a range of hands. If you can do that, thin value bets will get a lot easier. If you can't put your opponent on a range, you need to practice more or pay more attention to the way the hands play out as you go along. This is definitely a skill you should continually be trying to improve though anyway.

The sooner you get out of the habit of "playing it safe and just checking behind" with your marginal hands, the sooner you will open up the opportunity to add to your winrate and make more money from your sessions through thin value betting.

Try "[putting players on hands \(/strategy/general/putting-players-on-hands/\)](/strategy/general/putting-players-on-hands/)" for an in depth look at assigning hand ranges to your opponents. Also, [range merging \(/range-merging/\)](/range-merging/) is a prime example of getting thin value in certain situations.

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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? **Anonymous**
0 points · 10 years ago

Thin value diagram. What about weak hand. Should we bet it 10% or bet never.
But betting 10% eg 5\$ in a 50\$ pot our opponent will see a weakness and reraise us.
Please comment on that.
Thank you.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 10 years ago

If your opponent is a donk, yeah. 'lol weak bet, raise button!!'. Most cash regs will normally raise you only with very strong hands (for value) or complete air (cause they can't win otherwise).

G **Greg**
0 points · 9 years ago

In this situation you're essentially bluffing, so your opponent needs to fold a lot more to your bet to make it worthwhile (i.e. you have enough fold equity for your lack of card equity)
If you don't think your opponent folds enough of the time (you don't have enough fold equity), don't bet.

? **Anonymous**
0 points · 12 years ago

Best description so far for the concept, out of the 10 I have found so far. Does not mean i'll be able to do it correctly yet though!!

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The REM Process - Equity

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

REM Process (/): Range (/range/) > **Equity** > Maximize (/maximize/).

After you have put your opponent on a range of hands, the second step in the REM process is to find your "equity" in the hand.

RANGE
EQUITY
MAXIMIZE

The equity part mostly acts as a stepping stone for the following "maximize" step. However, as far as stepping stones go, this is a pretty tricky one that isn't overly easy to work out accurately.

On a basic level though, it's something that we actually all do without even thinking about it.

What is equity?

| **Equity is our "share" of the pot that we expect to win.**

It's pretty straightforward really, but if you want more of an overview of this term you should check out the basic [poker equity \(/.../mathematics/equity/\)](#) article.

When we work out our equity in a hand for the REM process, we compare our hand to **our opponent's range of hands** (remember the range we worked out in the first step?). Once we know our equity in the hand against this range, we can go on to make the appropriate play.

Working out equity on a basic level.

On an absolutely most-basic level, when we work out our equity we decide whether we have one of the following:

- A hand with the most equity - A strong hand that has the a strong chance of winning.
- A hand with poor equity - A weak hand that has a poor chance of winning.
- A hand with around evens equity - This could be a very strong draw, or a hand like AK facing an all-in.

When we compare our hand to our opponent's possible range of hands, we just want to asses the situation and take an educated guess to figure out where we stand in the hand.

That's all equity really is - a percentage representation of our strength in the hand. The main thing that we need to do to help us make the best play (maximize) is to figure out how strong our hand is based on our opponent's likely range of hands.

It is possible to work out a rough numerical idea of your equity in your head, but in all fairness this is far from being an easy task, and when you have programs like PokerStove to help you out when you are playing online it really makes it an unnecessary method to try and learn.



Calculating equity with PokerStove.

[PokerStove \(http://pokerstove.com\)](http://pokerstove.com) is a superb tool for accurately calculating your equity in a hand. All you have to do is input your hand against your opponent's range and let the program do the magic. No need for working stuff out in your head.

Here are a few examples of calculating your equity against ranges of hands in PokerStove.

Equity example 1.

We raise to 5BBs preflop with A♥ K♥ and tight player shoves all in with their short stack size (<http://pokerstove.com>) of 30BBs. We are confident that they will only be doing with with a pocket pair like JJ+ and AK.

Hand Distribution			Equity
Player 1		AhKh	42.806%
Player 2		JJ+,AKs,AKo	57.194%

Equity example 2.

We have K♣ Q♣ on a flop of T♣ J♦ 5♣. We bet and our opponent shoves all-in. We believe that they would only be doing this with TPTK, top two-pair or a set. Basically any hand like the strongest top pair or better.

Hand Distribution			Equity
Player 1	$\frac{R}{D}$	KcQc	53.485%
Player 2	$\frac{R}{D}$	JJ-TT,55,ATs,JTs,ATo,JTo	46.515%

Equity example 3.

We are dealt A♦ J♠ before the flop. One player pushes all-in and it is folded around to us. The guy at the table is moving all-in with every single hand he plays, so he could have absolutely anything.

Hand Distribution			Equity
Player 1	$\frac{R}{D}$	AdJs	80.132%
Player 2	$\frac{R}{D}$	random	19.868%

Are you supposed to use PokerStove to work out equity in every hand?

Of course not - that would take ages and be really annoying. I use PokerStove to work out equity against hand ranges in two instances:

1. For post-session analysis.
2. In the middle of a big hand when I'm using the time bank.

So unless you are using PokerStove as more of a one-off in the middle of a big hand, I would use the program off the tables when I'm analyzing my play and just generally playing around with different scenarios.

The more you play with it, the more you will familiarize yourself with the equity of specific hands against various ranges. This will greatly improve your basic equity calculations on the fly and help to set you up for the following "maximize" step.

Evaluation of "equity" in the REM process.

With the use of PokerStove, this step is really quick and easy. However without using PokerStove, figuring out your equity in a hand can involve a lot of guesswork. This is why familiarizing yourself with the various equity percentages in different situations can prove to be helpful when estimating equity on the spot.

The majority of the time, simply assessing the situation and using common sense is enough to lead you safely on to the "maximize" step. After all, you don't need me (or PokerStove) to tell you that you have bad equity in the hand when you hold 2♣ 2♦ on a flop of A♥ Q♥ J♥.

When it comes to bigger decisions, then it might be a good idea to plug some cards in to the calculator to find a more accurate equity percentage. Other than that just use common sense, supplement that with some time playing around with PokerStove and you should be fine.

Next stop, [The REM Process - Maximize \(../maximize/\)](https://commento.io/strategy/).

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](https://commento.io/strategy/).

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The REM Process - Range

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

[REM Process \(/\)](#): **Range** > [Equity \(/equity/\)](#) > [Maximize \(/maximize/\)](#).

The first step of the REM process is to put your opponents on a range of hands. In this article, I am going to show you how to assign ranges of hands to your opponent using stats and reads.

RANGE
EQUITY
MAXIMIZE

I am going to split this article up in to two hand reading sections:

1. Preflop hand ranges - the easy bit.
2. Post flop hand ranges - the trickier bit.

Remember that your objective with hand reading is to put your opponent on a range of hands, not two exact cards.

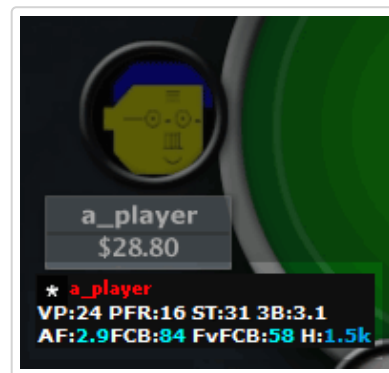
Preflop hand ranges.

The best way to assign a hand range to your opponent is to use the immensely useful HUD stats from tracking programs like [Poker Tracker \(/visit/poker-tracker/\)](#) and [HoldemManager \(/visit/holdem-manager/\)](#).

You can estimate a fairly accurate range based on knowledge of your opponent alone without any stats, but to teach that ability is out of the scope of this article, and using stats makes things a hell of a lot easier. So get HoldemManager and make your life easier.

Using the HUD stats.

On the right is a cropped screenshot of a PokerStars (../../rooms/pokerstars/) table with stats I have on a player using the HUD from Holdem Manager. There are a bunch of stats shown, but the two important ones that I am going to look at for now are:



Stats are great for pin-pointing ranges.

- **VIP** (../../articles/software/vpip/) (VP) - **Voluntarily Put \$ In Pot.**
 - This is the total % of times the player will enter the pot preflop by calling or raising.
- **PFR** (../../articles/software/pfr/) - **Preflop Raise.**
 - This is the % of times the player will enter a pot preflop by raising.

So that's cool - for this particular player "a_player" we can see that their **VIP is 24%** and their **PFR is 16%**. So we can say that a_player...

- Plays 24% of all hands that they are dealt.
- Raises with 16% of all hands that they are dealt.

Again, that's all well and good, but these are just figures. How can we turn these percentages in to ranges of hands? For that, we can take an educated guess at what 24% and 16% of starting hands looks like. Here is an excerpt from a legendary [thread by Pokey at 2+2 on hand reading](http://archives1.twoplustwo.com/showflat.php?Number=8629256) (<http://archives1.twoplustwo.com/showflat.php?Number=8629256>). :

Rough guide to hand ranges based on HUD stats.

- **5%** = "pairs 77+, AK, AQs" or "pairs 99+, AK, AQ."
 - **10%** = "pairs 66+, AK, AQ, suited aces, KQs, QJs"
 - **15%** = "any pair, AK, AQ, KQ, suited connectors 54+, any suited ace"
 - **20%** = "any pair, any two Broadway, any suited ace"
 - **25%** = "any pair, any suited Broadway, any ace, any suited connectors 54s+, KQo"
 - **30%** = "any pair, any ace, any suited king, any suited Broadway, any suited connectors 54s+, KTo+, QJo" or "any pair, any ace, any suited king, any Broadway"
 - **40%** = "any pair, any ace, any king, any two Broadway, any suited connectors 32s+"
 - **50%** = "any pair, any two suited cards, any ace, any two Broadway, K5o+"
-

This is of course just a rough guide, but nonetheless it is definitely something that is worth familiarizing yourself with. So, if we compare our percentages with these rough hand ranges we can conclude that our friend "a_player":

- **VPIP: 24%** - Is entering the pot with any pair, any suited Broadway, any ace and any suited connectors.
 - 22+,A2s+,KTs+,QTs+,JTs,T9s,98s,87s,76s,65s,54s,A2o+,KQo
- **PFR: 16%** - Is raising before the flop with any pair, AK, AQ, KQ, suited connectors 54+ and any suited ace.
 - 22+,A2s+,KQs,QJs,JTs,T9s,98s,87s,76s,65s,54s,AQo+,KQo

Thanks to these stats, we now have a very good idea of the sort of hands that our opponent will enter a pot with and more specifically, what sort of hands they will be open raising with. As we play through a hand with them we can whittle this range down even further by analyzing how our opponent plays the flop, turn and river.

These VPIP and PFR stats are also covered in the [Holdem Manager HUD tutorial](http://pokerstrategy.com/videos/wilcox/holdem-manager-hud/) (<http://pokerstrategy.com/videos/wilcox/holdem-manager-hud/>) and [HUD Ninja](http://pokerstrategy.com/videos/splitsuit/hud-ninja/) (<http://pokerstrategy.com/videos/splitsuit/hud-ninja/>), videos.

What is my opponent has stats like VPIP: 40 / PFR: 30?

Then so be it - they have a wide range of hands that they will enter pots and raise with. Don't be phased by the fact you can't put them on a super-specific range before the flop.

It just means that they are loose and you shouldn't give them credit for premium holdings too often. Sure, we can't get a real specific range, but we still know what sort of hands we *can* include in their range, so don't be surprised when they turn up with a hand like 34 offsuit at a showdown.

Adjust your preflop play accordingly and use the flop, turn and river betting rounds to try and best work out what sort of hand they might be holding.

Post flop hand ranges.

This is where it gets trickier.

Using our preflop hand range as a base, our aim is to now refine that range as much as possible.

The more we (safely) reduce our opponent's range, the more information we will have in the hand and the more **+EV** (<http://pokerstrategy.com/mathematics/expected-value/>), our plays will be. However, whittling down our opponents hand range post flop isn't going to be quite as easy as it was to look at a bunch of

stats like we did before the flop.

It would be great if I could tell you to "do this" and "do that" to figure out exactly what your opponent is holding, but that's just not how poker works I'm afraid. However, I can give you a few tips to help you reduce that range.

Question every play and put yourself in your opponent's shoes.

That's right, pretend that you are playing your opponent's hand for him (or her). What hands would "make sense" for the plays you are making? Ask yourself these questions...

- Why would my opponent check on this flop?
- Why would my opponent bet on this flop?
- Why would my opponent raise on this flop?

Now do that for every betting round. The better you can answer those questions, the easier it will be to reduce your opponent's range and form a more complete picture of the hand.

Of course, that's a lot easier said than done, but who said poker is easy? Poker is a thinking man's game, so put your brain to good use and always aim to try and figure out why your opponent is playing the way they are.

If you can figure out why your opponent is making their plays, you can figure out what they are likely to be holding.

It's a pretty non-specific strategy I know, but this is where practice comes in to play. I can't teach you how to read hands like a champ in one article (probably not even in 5 or 6 articles for that matter), so get out there and play some poker.

Evaluation of "range" in the REM process.

I'm sure that a lot of you were impressed with how easy it was to assign a hand range to your opponent's preflop, but then quietly disappointed with the "use your head" approach for post flop hand ranges.

HoldemManager stats *can* help with post flop hand ranges, but then that would make this article longer than my manhood. The bulk of useful information is going to come from your experience and knowledge anyway when it comes to post flop hand ranges.

A great follow on article from this is "[putting players on a hand \(/strategy/general/putting-players-on-hands/\)](/strategy/general/putting-players-on-hands/)", which is quite long but is a great supplement to this hand reading and range article.

Next stop, [The REM Process - Equity \(/equity/\)](/equity/).

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy \(/strategy/\)](/strategy/).

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Anonymous

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Hi all,

You said -

"The more we (safely) reduce our opponent's range, the more information we will have in the hand and the more+EV our plays will be. However, whittling down our opponents hand range post flop isn't going to be quite as easy as it was to look at a bunch of stats like we did before the flop."

I couldn't agree more, but I was tired of using a limited amounts of stats, for such important decisions, when really you need at least thousands of occurrences of a particular stat for it to be in any way meaningful, and when eventually I had managed to accumulate enough stats on a player/players, said players would either move up in stakes, or I would, and would therefore have to start all over once again with limited information.

If like myself, you have decided to take you're game to the next level, be it using exploitative, or a GTO style, then really the only way to do this is to maximise available villain stats by super-boosting you're tracking database with imported hand histories.

I did this, an it has catapulted my success to that new level!

Simply go to the best hand histories site by far in my opinion, HHSmithy, and I know you will not look back, I haven't.

Good luck at the tables,

Mikem.

N **Nathalie Robert**
0 points · 5 years ago

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The REM Process - Maximize

By [Greg Walker \(/about/\)](#).

[REM Process \(/\)](#): [Range \(/range/\)](#) > [Equity \(/equity/\)](#) > **Maximize**

The final (and arguably most important) step in the REM process is "Maximize". This involves making the optimum play to get the most value from your hand.

RANGE
EQUITY
MAXIMIZE

Unfortunately, the art of maximizing your profits from every hand you play is out of the scope of one article. However, what I will be able to do is give you some groundwork for making optimum plays at the table.

Maximizing value on a basic level.

On a basic level, optimum play is to get as much money in the middle with the best hand and save your money when you do not.

When you have the hand with the greatest equity you want to get as much money in to the pot as possible. When you don't have good equity in the hand you want to see future cards as cheaply as possible, which generally involves checking and folding.

You want to play as closely as you can to the [fundamental theorem of poker](#) ([../../theorems/fundamental/](#)) to help you maximize your winnings from each hand you play.

The fundamental theorem of poker.

"Every time you play a hand differently from the way you would have played it if you could see all your opponents' cards, they gain; and every time you play your hand the same way you would have played it if you could see all their cards, they lose."

So if we knew what our opponent was holding at all times, we would be able to make the optimum play on every single betting round. When maximizing value from our hands, we want to try and make the same play that we would make if we could see our opponent's holecards.

One problem.

That's all well and good, but **there is a hell of a lot of middle ground where we will not know if we are ahead of behind in a hand**. Therefore, we just have to make the best play we can with the limited information we have from the range ([../range/](#)) and equity ([../equity/](#)) sections of the REM process ([../](#)).

Betting and raising.

Whenever you bet or raise, ask yourself this question:

| Do I want my opponent to fold or do I want them to call?

Really think about it.

- If you want them to call, you are betting for value.
- If you want them to fold, you are bluffing.

That's all there is to it. **If you do not know whether you want your opponent to do either, you should not be betting.**

Far too many players make bets with no reasoning behind why they are making them. The chances are that if you do not know why you are betting, a large number of your bets are going to be -EV ([../../mathematics/expected-value/](#)).

Betting for value.

A super-common example for you. We raise in the CO and the BB calls.

Our hand: A♦ K♣

Flop: A♠ 9♥ 7♠

As we all should know, on this flop we should bet out. Why? Because we have good equity against our opponent's range, which is likely to be a weaker ace or lower pocket pair. We are betting for value in the hope that our opponent will call with a weaker ace or a flush draw because we have greater equity in the hand (even if they may have a better hand like 2 pair or a set).

Hand Distribution			Equity
Player 1	$\frac{R}{D}$	AdKc	68.531%
Player 2	$\frac{R}{D}$	99,77,A2s+,KsQs,KsJs,KsTs,QsJs,Qs1	31.469%

The equity of our AdKc against villain's range. Found using PokerStove.

Yep that's right, we actually want our opponent to call with a flush draw. If the pot is \$10 and we bet \$8, they are getting terrible odds to chase their flush. Therefore, if they call they are making a mistake and we are gaining from this mistake. If they fold on the other hand, they are making the correct play and we gain nothing.

"Betting to protect your hand" is very bad alternate terminology for "betting for value". What are we protecting our hand from? Players calling with bad odds and worse hands? According to the fundamental theorem of poker we want our opponents to call with bad odds and worse hands, as we gain nothing otherwise.

Try your best to get used to the idea of either betting for value or bluffing. "Protecting your hand" is not the right way to explain your bets - "betting for value" is.

Bluffing.

Our hand: A♠ Q♠

Flop: T♠ 2♥ 7♠

Let's say we raised preflop in the CO and the button calls. Our opponent then bets out 3/4 of the pot on this flop. With our overcards and nut flush draw, we reraise. However, is this reraise for value or as a bluff? In other words, do we want our opponent to call or to fold?

Well, first things first, this all depends on our opponents range. If we figure that our opponent is the type of player to only ever bet out on this sort of flop with top pair or better, our equity in the hand is as follows:

Hand Distribution			Equity
Player 1	$\frac{R}{D}$	AsQs	44.592%
Player 2	$\frac{R}{D}$	QQ-TT,66,22,ATs,KTs,ATo,KTo	55.408%

The equity of our AsQs against villain's range. Found using PokerStove.

As you can see, we do not have the dominant equity in the hand. So in this situation, by raising we are hoping that our opponent will fold their better hand. Therefore we are bluffing. Simple as that.

Sure, it's technically a [semi-bluff](#) ([../../plays/semi-bluff/](#)), because it's not all that bad if our opponent calls this raise, but based on the equity we have right now our raise is a bluff. Hopefully this helps to illustrate the difference between bluffing and betting for value.

Evaluation of "maximize" in the REM process.

I only really covered the north-facing side of the tip of the ice berg in this article. I was going to cover more on maximizing value with checking and calling, but in all honesty I would have just been rehashing some pretty basic strategy to reinforce the same point I put across in the betting and raising section.

Maximizing value in poker is a skill that you will be perfecting for life. A lot of the strategy you read all boils down to making the best decisions possible and getting the most from your hands. As long as you always think about every decision you make, you will continue to improve your game and make optimum plays more frequently.

Poker will always be a game of broken information - one big jigsaw puzzle with a few pieces missing. We just have to try to put it together and do the best we can with the information we have at hand - and then make the best play we can.

Go back to the overview of [The REM Process](#) ([../](#)).

Go back to the awesome [Texas Hold'em Strategy](#) ([/strategy/](#)).

Comments

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**Anonymous****0 points** · 10 years ago

Just FYI, in your bluffing section, you accidentally input 6,6 into Poker Stove, instead of 7,7 (the flop had a 7 in it, not a 6).

**Anonymous****0 points** · 11 years ago

Previous case has the opponent betting out as the button when we are in the CO. What is really intended here?

**larskyhnau****0 points** · 11 years ago

"According to the fundamental theorem of poker we want our opponents to call with bad odds and worse hands, as we gain nothing otherwise."

That is not really true in my opinion. Even if poker was played with "open" hole cards, so that people were able to always make the right decisions when facing raises, the player with the strongest hand would still benefit from raising.

If one player has 75% equity in the hand and the other player 25% equity, the player with 75% equity should make a bet of more than 50% of pot. The other player would then fold, because he knows he is getting incorrect odds to call, and this would increase the winrate of the betting player from 75% to 100%, which is a huge gain in winrate.

It is true though, that you should know, why you are betting, and if you are happy to get called or not. And if you are not happy to get called, you should have a reason to assume, that your bet will generate enough folds to compensate for the extra money, you expect to lose, when you get called.

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